

MY REMINISCENCES
OF THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

WAR AND REVOLUTION IN ASIATIC RUSSIA . .

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MY REMINISCENCES OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION · By M.

PHILIPS PRICE, FORMER CORRESPONDENT
OF THE *Manchester Guardian* IN RUSSIA



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TO THOSE LEADERS AND TO THE RANK
AND FILE OF BRITISH LABOUR WHO
BY SPEECH, PEN AND ACTION HAVE
DEFENDED THE SOVIET REPUBLIC
OF RUSSIA AGAINST THE ONSLAUGHTS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL BONDHOLDERS

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

How much is it, by far, the greatest and
the best thing that has ever happened in
the history of the world.

CHARLES JAMES FOX
on the French Revolution.

PREFACE

IN the following pages I have tried to supply what has been so long wanting—a consecutive account from its earliest stages of the great upheaval in Europe, known as the Russian Revolution. My original intention was to write a documented history. I have not done so for two reasons. Firstly, because events, over which I had no control, caused me to lose a great part of the archives, collected by me during my four years' residence in Russia. The work of documenting the Russian Revolution will doubtless be reserved for others with the full material at their disposal. Secondly, I felt that, as I had lived through the first one and a half years of the Revolution, and had seen its phases and developments with my own eyes, it would be desirable to introduce the personal element into this book and to rely mainly on the diary which I had kept of my own experiences and observations.

It is generally recognized that a historian, if he claims to be impartial, must write some time after the events with which he is concerned. The Russian Revolution is still too near to the present to make it possible to see it in perspective. Indeed, it is still in process of development. I have written these lines, therefore, with the memories of the Revolution fresh in my mind. Under these circumstances objective criticism is difficult. But one is tempted to ask if the historian even of the distant past is always objective. And it is not without interest to know that there are those in Russia to-day who say that education and historical research are one of the most powerful instruments of the ruling class to secure their spiritual hegemony over the toiling masses. For my part I make no apology for defending the Russian Revolution and the party with which it will be forever associated with all the power at my disposal in the following pages. For the scenes which I describe I saw myself, the dramas which were acted I took part in myself, the sufferings which I witnessed I felt myself, the hopes which were raised inspired me also.

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But I have written not only under the influence of a reaction against the flood of abuse which has been poured out by the ruling classes of my country against the leaders of the Russian Revolution. I have written under a deep conviction, acquired during my stay in Russia. For it is no exaggeration to say that to any moderately intelligent observer Russia acts like a mental melting-pot. And in the crucible of the class struggle the useless slag of fiction and make-belief is thrown up, and the pure metal of a new idea is left behind. The writer is not the only person who with no knowledge of the teachings of Marx went to Russia, and who, on the basis of what he saw, is prepared now to interpret the events in Eastern Europe as the first phase of a social revolution which will be world-wide. My own psychological development in this connection can be traced in this book in various passages, taken from despatches, which I sent from time to time to the *Manchester Guardian*.

I have paid considerable attention to the agrarian movements, which played such a large part in the earlier stages of the Revolution. I have described journeys which I made in the rural districts of Russia at various phases of the Revolution. If I have devoted as much as eight chapters to the so-called Kerensky period, that is because I wanted to lay special stress on the fact that the social revolution was in progress long before the day when the Communists came into power.

The book is concerned almost solely with those phases of the revolution which I lived through. In the last two chapters, however, I have dealt with developments after I left Russia, and I have based my information on communications and reports which I have received from time to time.

I do not expect that this book will find sympathy in those circles in England who have been responsible for the official British policy in Russia during the last decade. Neither do I expect that it will awaken the enthusiasm of the holders of the bonds of the old Tsar's Government or of their intellectual lackeys. But I am not concerned with these. I have put together the following chapters in order that British Labour may know how the great Russian Revolution came, whither it is likely to lead, and how the rulers of England acted in the events to which it gave rise.

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My Reminiscences of the Russian Revolution

CHAPTER I

THE RED DAWN IN MOSCOW

THE March Revolution came like a thief in the night. How often had its possibility been discussed in Russia during the two and a half years that followed the outbreak of the Great War! Over samovars and tea-glasses officers and students had speculated whether it would come during the war or after peace. Working men had whispered of it in *traktirs*¹ with bated breath. Soldiers had timidly broached the subject to each other in the trenches. When at last it came, nobody seemed quite to know what had happened. In the distant provinces the wildest rumours were circulating. The Petrograd workmen had made it, said one, and they did not represent the true Russia. The Revolution was made by a people, exasperated by a pro-German Tsar, to enable the war to be prosecuted with greater vigour, said a second. It was the unmistakable sign of a patriotic revival, said a third. It was the beginning of chaos, said a fourth. In this atmosphere of uncertainty I travelled up from the Caucasus, making for Moscow, eager to know how the Metropolis of Russian culture had responded to the great event, and what part it had played in the drama.

The first thing I remember noticing on my arrival was that a large number of meetings were going on in the streets round the Kursk railway station. Now, this struck me at the time as very remarkable. Street meetings in Russia under Tsarism were things unheard of. We were so accustomed to secrecy and silence that it was almost impossible to conceive that people should get together to give vent to their feelings in public speeches.

¹ Tea-rooms.

But now, as if in response to some psychological wave sweeping over the surface of the human sea, groups of people were congregating at the street corners, in the squares and round the monuments. A feeling of unrest was in the air. Tsarism had fallen through its own internal rottenness. Everyone was astonished at the suddenness of its fall. "Why did we not knock this Colossus over before?" some people seemed to be asking themselves, and they hardly liked to answer the question because the answer might betray that they had been victims of something akin to cowardice. They had been afraid of that bogey that used to flourish before them a two-headed Imperial Eagle and that looked so terrible, but they had never realized that the bogey was only a turnip-head and that the Eagle was made of paste. They would not admit that they had fallen victims to the old human weakness of being hypnotized by rulers who had made themselves imposing. And so each person, now the deed was done, seemed to believe that *he* was partly, at any rate, responsible for the Revolution; that *he* had never feared the power of the autocracy. But when I began to ask how the Revolution in Moscow came, no one seemed quite to know. Telegrams from Petersburg, I was told, indicated food riots in the capital; revolts among the sailors of the Baltic fleet. News was held back; rumours circulated; the atmosphere was electric; the bureaucracy nervous. Only when it was certain that the capital was in the hands of a workers' council and that the soldiers of the garrison had joined, did the satraps of Tsarism in Moscow lay down their authority. A few thousand workmen and soldiers far away in the north had dared to kick the rotten Colossus. Only when *they* had dared and done did the other thousands in Moscow and the millions in the provinces realize that they could do the same, and that no gendarme would dare to say them nay. And so a rebellious impulse swept over the land as a result of the action of the audacious few on the banks of the Neva. Are Governments of Tsars so formidable that they must always be obeyed? Perhaps they can be disobeyed just for once. This was the thought that made the March Revolution.

The news of the abdication of Nicolas Romanoff came to the provinces like a bombshell. What was to happen now? Everyone was asking himself this question! The answers were varied, and seemed to depend very largely upon the type of person who gave the answer. On examining the Moscow crowds more closely one could see that they consisted broadly of two elements. On the one hand there was a well-dressed section of middle-class people, students, officers, advocates, doctors; on the other

hand there were common soldiers, workmen, small handcraftsmen, who could be detected at once by their weather-worn, collarless shirts.

Involuntarily the conversations seemed to be drifting on to one main topic, which was evidently engaging the attention of all: bread and peace. The question how to get food and how to stop the war was pushing itself to the surface, worrying the public mind, demanding an answer. No one liked to talk openly about it, because everyone had for so long been drilled to silence. But everyone knew that a fifteen-million army was eating up the material resources of Russia. Everyone knew that the railways were no longer equal to the transport burden, that the cereals formerly exported to Western Europe were now more than absorbed by the army, that the cultivated area had fallen 10 per cent. last year, and was certain to fall more this spring; that the workmen of several big towns had been several days without bread, while Grand Dukes and profiteers had large stores in their houses. Everyone knew that the Tsar's Government had signed secret treaties with the Allies, and was pledged to fight to conquer Constantinople and the left bank of the Rhine; and that the mere existence of these treaties meant an indefinite continuation of the war. How did this prospect appeal to the people at the street meetings?

As evidence of the subconscious drift of the people's mind in these first days of the Revolution, I may cite fragments of conversations, which I noted down in my diary. Scene: a group of well-dressed people in furs, standing round a couple of soldiers just back on leave from the front; background, the Strastnaya Square and the Pushkin monument, from the foot of which speeches were being made. "What! Not go on with the war because there is not enough bread! But the Germans will come here, and that will be the end of the Revolution." "Perhaps they won't come," replied a soldier, "if we explain to them that we are ready to leave them alone." "But we must liberate our brother Slavs in Galicia from the Austrian yoke, and the Poles from the Germans," said a well-dressed one, who, judging from his looks, had been for four years "arm-chair patriotic." "That is their affair, not ours," said the soldier laconically. An officer, who reported himself to have been several times wounded, said something about Constantinople and the need of a commercial outlet through the Dardanelles. The two soldiers did not seem to think that that affected them very much, and began to talk about army rations which had been reduced, length of furlough, means of livelihood after demobiliza-

tion. Prussian militarism was far off; only things near and practical seemed to affect them.

And so it was in all the conversations. Two social groups were engaged in spiritual conflict. One was composed of men who were already beginning to fear that they were exchanging feudal slavery under an agrarian aristocracy for wage slavery under a parvenu middle class. The other seemed to feel that it was abandoning the rôle of the lackey of Tsarism in order to become the real ruler in the State. There was not as yet any open conflict between these two groups. For there was after all in these days a common bond which held them together. Both rejoiced for different reasons at the fall of autocracy and of personal rule. The soul of Russia was indeed astir. We all instinctively had the feeling that a new era was at hand. Could it be that Russia was coming to the millennium of the reign of Reason, for which Rousseau prepared eighteenth-century France? The French people thought they were on the eve of its realization on August 4, 1789; but phantom-like it melted away and became the reign of the sordid, money-bag middle-class respectability of the nineteenth century. I believe the well-to-do Moscow citizens on these March days of 1917 thought that, after two and a half years of war-profiteering and militarist pamphleteering, *they* were the elect, on whom had fallen the mantle of revolutionary France. In the Tverskaya street the fashionable bookshops displayed red-bound histories of the French Revolution. At the opera the *Marseillaise* was played, and everyone, including occupants of the stalls and boxes, rose. Was the Russian bourgeoisie giving lip-service to the idea of liberty, equality, fraternity? Did they want the Russian Revolution to end where the French Revolution had ended a century before? For only thus could they feel secure in their war profits and in their ample possessions swollen by the war. But if this was their aim, had they accurately estimated the forces that had made the Russian Revolution?

To answer that question one had to go again to the streets and study in the open-air meetings the different social types which were already appearing, like blue, white and yellow crocusses beneath the melting snows of spring. Those respectable well-dressed people honestly thought that *they* had made the Revolution, that *they* had removed the parasite Romanoff Eagles in order the more successfully to prosecute the Great War. Revolution meant to them larger outlets for their activities, hitherto cramped by aristocratic privileges. It meant to those who possessed property the right to possess still more, and enjoy

it with increasing security, provided always that those troublesome workers would keep quiet. It meant that the war would end victoriously, and bring them a greater share of after-war booty.

Revolution meant to the small professional man in the crowd that peace with victory was not far off, that he would then be able to return to the same quiet life as he led before the war, retire to a *dacha*¹ and end his days in peace, undisturbed by mobilization orders and oppressive food restrictions. But Revolution meant to the haggard workman something very different. It meant that the war indeed would soon be over, but that he would *not* return to the condition he was in before; that the narrow margin between weekly expenses and weekly wages would widen, and widen considerably; that the dread uncertainty of employment, dependent on the caprice of an employer, would give place to something more stable; that he would no longer be packed off into the army to fight for somebody else's possessions as a punishment for daring to defend his workman's rights. The Revolution meant to the peasant soldier, disputing in the crowd with his officer about the fate of Constantinople, that the memories of his life between 1914 and 1917 would be as a bad dream, and that land—land in plenty, and far more than there was before the war—would be at his disposal as soon as he arrived in his village. Beneath the enthusiasm of the common rejoicing in those street meetings one could see that at least three different social types were interpreting the Revolution in three different senses. Which of these types would lead the Revolution? Would it be the well-dressed man with the money-bag, or the timid little professional man, hankering after the paradise that had disappeared? Or would something pale, ragged, hungry—yes, if you like, brutal and raw—build the new altar and make it the shrine of Holy Russia from that day forth?

It was after visiting the barracks of one of the Moscow regiments on the outskirts of the city that I first began to realize that a new element in society, hitherto suppressed, was beginning to take an active part in shaping the destinies of Russia. I had gone to the barracks with a Russian friend, who was interested in evening courses for soldiers on the land question. Here was an innovation indeed! That soldiers should be thinking about land questions showed the length we had already gone in these few days since the fall of Tsarism. In an open space outside the barracks some three or four hundred soldiers had gathered round

¹ Country villa.

a portable soup kitchen. Delegates from every company were there, talking in groups or listening to someone holding forth from the top of the soup kitchen. No officer was to be seen. Everyone was expressing opinions quite unreservedly. It was impossible to tell who was chairman, nor was it quite clear which were the delegates with mandates and which were soldiers who had wandered in to satisfy their curiosity. Food rations were the subject of debate, and someone with a louder voice and more initiative than the rest proposed a delegation of three to the commanding officer to demand the immediate increase of these rations, which were threatened with reduction on account of food shortage.

Soon I perceived that war and peace possibilities were being discussed. Should they go up to the front if ordered to do so? What were the objects of the war? Were there really secret treaties? Could the war be stopped with honour now? All these questions I heard hotly debated among the soldiers. But if the war could be discussed with impunity, why not other subjects? All the soldiers were peasants, and in their villages allotments were small. The population was increasing, but not the land, and the landlords' estates hemmed them in on every side. A burly soldier mounted the shaft of the soup kitchen and began to hold forth on his grievance as a peasant. "What we want is land, as soon as we return home. We took up our rifles for our mother earth, and we will not put them down till we get it." Thunderous applause greeted these remarks. This primitive Soldiers' Soviet was getting on its legs. From food rations it had gone on to discuss war and peace, from war and peace to the land question. Of the three the food problem was the only one which had been discussed with a view to practical solution. The other two topics were discussed at present only in the abstract, but this embryo Soldiers' Soviet had, at any rate, become a centre for exchange of views on subjects which till yesterday were forbidden to all outside the charmed circle of the ruling caste. The next stage of the Revolution had been reached. First came the street meetings, indiscriminate minglings of all elements of society in public places. Then came a tendency to split up into associations which took the most convenient form and corresponded with daily occupation, industry and employment. Soldiers gathered in their barrack councils; workers formed committees based on the factory; small tradesmen tried to get in touch with others in the same way of business. The mediæval guild was beginning to appear again in modern forms, and received the name "Soviet," the Russian for council.

Here was a new force in Russian politics, created by the March Revolution. Peasants in uniforms had remembered suddenly that they were human beings, and in future were to be consulted. There was no sign that these soldiers had given their support to the Revolution out of a desire to prosecute more effectively the war with Germany for the secret treaties. Peace, land and bread was the goal to which the workmen and soldiers, who were creating these spontaneous Soviets, were aiming. It was impossible to find any divisions in their ranks; there was no trace of discord between Bolshevik, Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary in these days. True, these parties were already setting forth their various interpretations of the Revolution in the form of objective articles in their press. But a visit to the Bolshevik and the Menshevik Party headquarters, in a side street of the Tverskaya, proved conclusively that these two wings of the "Revolutionary Democracy" had nothing at this stage to quarrel about. The leading articles in the Revolutionary Parties' newspapers were all written in the same tone, and were the most refreshing reading. "The Revolution has no interest in Constantinople," wrote the Menshevik organ in these days. "Away with the Imperialist annexation schemes of the Tsar! If we insist that our bourgeoisie renounces this policy, then we shall give an impetus to the workers in Germany. Let the Armenians and Turks settle their own affairs without our interference." And then I remember reading the report in these days of the first meetings of the Soldiers' Soviets in the Kazan military area. A resolution, couched in moderate tones, had been passed. "If the war is to be carried to a victorious end," it read, "let there be no annexations or indemnities, and let each nationality enjoy self-determination."

But the great mass movement was still in its very early stages. The slaves of yesterday who had quaked before the Tsarist gendarmes could not believe that they were really free to decide the destinies of Russia. Without someone from the hitherto ruling caste to take the initiative, life seemed impossible. And so by sheer force of habit the workmen and soldiers of Moscow still continued to look to their old masters in the expectation that they too would be infected by the new psychology, and would come forward and say: "We will be your leaders." This accounted for the large number of officers, advocates, middle-class politicians, journalists, and even small Government officials who were elected to the Moscow Soviet in these early days. Anyone from the Moscow Merchants' Guild, any of the former lackeys of the fallen autocracy, who had any reputation

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for liberality, was elected, because the masses did not trust themselves. "March" Socialists were many. Anyone of the free professions and anyone with a university education who was not known to be a Monarchist, could get into the Socialist Revolutionary Party. The Menshevik group and the Socialist Revolutionary Party were literally filled in these days with people who in reality had nothing in common with Socialism and the Revolution, and these people acquired a great influence over the provincial Soviets.

How were the propertied classes responding to the revolutionary flood? They would talk at the street meetings and feebly present their case. But beyond this they seemed afraid to go at this stage. It was dangerous for them to come out into the open and advocate a continuance of the war for Constantinople. They dared not denounce the division of the landlords' land as robbery. For a time at least they had to retire into their holes.

But if the propertied classes had lost their direct hold on the masses, they were strengthening their indirect hold through the bureaucratic machine of State. This was very forcibly brought home to me during an interview which I obtained with the then Foreign Minister, M. Miliukoff, during a chance visit that he was paying to Moscow in these days. When I broached the question of the Russian Revolution's peace programme, which had just been foreshadowed by the Petrograd Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—peace without annexations or indemnities—he replied: "We still believe in victory, and in that case we cannot accept a programme which is not in full accord with that of our Allies." "And does that mean that Russia is to fight for Constantinople and for the partition of the Austrian Empire?" I asked. He answered: "No scheme for internationalizing Constantinople can be satisfactory, unless the fortifications on the Dardanelles and at the entrance to the Black Sea are in the hands of Russia. As for Austria, only partition can solve the Southern Slav question." On being asked whether it would be possible to secure that Constantinople, as the junction of two great highways, should be open to the commerce of all nations, he replied that "that would be contrary to the decisions of the Paris Conference in June 1916 which decided that the Central Powers were not to be granted the same economic facilities as Allied or neutral States after the war."

What a contrast to the psychology of the workmen in the Moscow street meetings and of the soldiers in their barrack Soviets! Whatever had happened outside, there had been no revolution in the Government Departments, and least of all

in the Foreign Office. The same old Tsarist plans of conquest were being run by officials, who had exchanged the watchword "aristocratic privilege" for "middle-class efficiency." And in the background stood the sinister influence of foreign Imperialism as indicated in the reference to the Paris Economic Resolutions. The Russian Foreign Office was becoming more and more the organ of those who were responsible for these resolutions. And the workmen and soldiers of Russia had the privilege of honouring in flesh and blood the blank cheque given by the Tsar and the Russian bourgeoisie to the foreign partners in the secret treaties. The workmen and soldiers of the big towns at this time felt instinctively the approaching danger. The Tsar's Government had been the world's gendarme. If these secret treaties stood, the Allies would automatically inherit what Tsarism had left behind, and become the slave-drivers of the Russian people in the war with Germany. In this terrible predicament the leaders of all progressive thought in Russia looked to the leaders of Labour in England for comfort and hope.

And how were their hopes met? I remember, shortly after this interview with M. Miliukoff, a British Labour delegation came to Moscow. It consisted of three well-known members of the British Labour Party and of the Trade Union Congress. They had come to show the solidarity of the British workers with the Russian Revolution. I was present when they received a deputation from the Moscow Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. These men, who were members of all parties in the Soviet, began by asking what was the attitude of British Labour to the Russian Revolutionaries' proposal of peace without annexations or indemnities and with the right of self-determination for nationalities. They were told that the formula was obscure and in part contradictory, and that it would have to be worked out in more detail before British Labour could be asked to accept it as a practical step towards peace. These fine formulas, said one of the British delegates, would have no influence on the British workmen, who were determined to carry the war through to complete victory. The Russian Revolutionaries, it was declared, had no idea of the danger they were running in coquetting with peace at this time. One of the Russians protested that the acceptance by the Allies of the Russian Revolutionaries' peace programme, showing that the old annexationist plans were abandoned, not only did not mean coquetting with Prussian militarism, but really meant giving moral strength to its opponents in Germany, who were working for a break-up of Kaiserism. But the British delegates were firm. No peace,

they said, could be obtained by such means. Only the complete military defeat and crushing of Germany for many years to come would bring peace in the world. "But even if that were the best tactics to adopt for destroying Prussian militarism, which is as much our enemy as it is yours," said one of the Russians, "is that any reason why we should not renounce the old annexationist plans of the Tsar's late regime and publish the secret treaties? The Tsar made us fight for Constantinople, which is not Russian, and never was." One of the British delegates thereupon jovially burst out: "If you don't want Constantinople, then, damn it, we'll take it!" I remember a long silence after this remark, then handshaking and the withdrawal of the deputation from the representatives of British "Labour."

Yes, the psychologies of the Russian Revolutionaries and of these British Labour leaders were as the poles apart. I seemed to see two different worlds of ideas and hear two different languages while they were talking together.

The Red Day had dawned on Mother Moscow. Russia was lighting the fire of a new life. But had Western Europe seen the glow in the sky?

CHAPTER II

THE PETROGRAD SOVIET AND THE FIRST COALITION

LIKE Moscow, Petrograd had its halcyon days at the beginning of the March Revolution, and they reached their climax on May 1, 1917. I do not think I ever saw a more impressive spectacle than on this occasion. It was not merely a labour demonstration, although every socialist party and workmen's union in Russia was represented there, from anarcho-syndicalists to the most moderate of the middle-class democrats. It was not merely an international demonstration, although every nationality of what had been the Russian Empire was represented there with its flag and inscription in some rare, strange tongue, from the Baltic Finns to the Tunguses of Siberia. The First of May celebration, 1917, in Petrograd and throughout the length and breadth of Russia was really a great religious festival, in which the whole human race was invited to commemorate the brotherhood of man. Revolutionary Russia had a message to the world, and was telling it across the roar of the cannons and the din of battle.

The halcyon days of the March Revolution reached their climax on May 1st and then passed. The struggle began between the social groups which together had made the Revolution. That struggle was to decide which of the groups was from that time onwards to lead Russia. Now, in order to understand the developments which took place during the summer of 1917, it is necessary to get some idea of the institutions which the Revolution had brought into being. We have seen in the last chapter how the informal street meetings, in which workmen for the first time faced the bourgeoisie, and how the gatherings of soldiers in barracks, where everything from food rations to the war was discussed, were the first embryonic indications of the revolutionary power of the masses. Petrograd, however, was the first big centre in Russia where this power began to assume concrete forms. The committees of workmen and soldiers which were formed

in Petrograd directly after the fall of the autocracy, united first in a Central Council, and then became the earliest and greatest examples of a proletarian Soviet. They differed from all other public institutions that had yet appeared in Russia and had pretended to political power by the fact that their delegates came from bodies of citizens organized on an industrial basis. Every factory that had a thousand employees, every shop-assistants' guild or group of artisans that existed for the purpose of protecting the economic interests of its members, claimed and acquired a right to send a representative to the central Petrograd Soviet. The Petrograd workman thus suddenly found that he could make his voice heard in the affairs of the city and of the country through the delegates of his own industrial organization. He had not to go through the clumsy formalities of parliamentary electoral registration. He acquired influence in public life simply through the fact that he worked for the community, and he was able to exercise that influence through his elected delegate in the branch of industry in which he earned his daily bread. This delegate he could withdraw at will, and he thus could keep a direct control over his activities.

It was not strange that the Russian workman should have been the first to carry out in practice this new form of popular representation. There had never been in Russia any such institution as a democratic Parliament, and even municipal and rural councils had been appointed by the Tsarist bureaucracy or elected on a narrow property franchise. The Russian workmen and peasant soldiers had never been used to the idea of parliamentary elections, in which the whole community votes in artificial geographical constituencies. Moreover, how could a gigantic country like Russia, stretching across two continents, hold, within a few weeks of the fall of Tsarism, a general election to decide a question so pressing as how to carry on the government of the country in the midst of a great upheaval? Even if such an election had been technically possible, it would be necessary to use the machinery of Tsarism to carry it out, because none other was ready. But the bureaucracy that controlled that machinery was drawn from the ruling aristocratic caste and from its intellectual hangers-on among the bourgeoisie. The Press and the banks, too, were in the hands of the big industrialists and the agents of the old regime. But in the factory or workshop the Petrograd workman could find an industrial unit which would enable him to keep in touch with his fellow-workers and directly influence the course of the Revolution. Industrial representation, industrial action; these were therefore the tactics which the

Petrograd workman unconsciously adopted to make his influence felt in the days which followed the March Revolution. And out of this action came the first Petrograd Soviet. It was followed much later by similar revolutionary industrial organizations throughout the length and breadth of the land, so that even far-off villages began to convert their primitive land communes into peasant committees which aspired to political authority over the countryside. It was a simple, natural process, for Russia was not shackled with traditions of Parliaments and institutions dating back to the Middle Ages. The slate was clean, and there was nothing to prevent the Russians from trying new experiments in the art of government.

The remarkable thing about the Soviets during the eight months of the March Revolution was that they possessed their greatest power during the first few days of their existence and gradually allowed that power to slip from their grasp, until a second—the November—Revolution was necessary to bring it back. It is no exaggeration to say that during the momentous days in the first week of March, 1917, when Nicolas II was signing his Abdication Ukase, Room Number 13 in the Taurida Palace, where the first delegates of the Petrograd Council of Workers and Soldiers gathered, was the most important centre in the city—indeed in Russia. The Committee of the Imperial Duma, consisting of members of the middle-class parties, had not only done nothing to overthrow Tsarism, but had actually done everything to bolster it up under cover of a constitutional monarchy. The President of the Duma, Rodzianko, sent a telegram to the Tsar, begging him at the eleventh hour to grant a Constitution to “save the dynasty and prevent Petrograd from falling into the hands of the mob.” Indeed, it was only the Petrograd Soviet delegates who scotched the plan for a constitutional monarchy by howling down M. Miliukoff, the new Foreign Minister, when he came out to address the workers and soldiers assembled in the central hall of the Palace, and when he began by informing them that “the crown would now pass to the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch.” But the Petrograd Soviet did not stand only on the defensive against the Constitutional Monarchists and the bourgeoisie. It took the offensive as the famous Order No. 1 bears witness. This order was issued by the Petrograd Soviet from Room Number 13 on the initiative of the Bolshevik leader Stekloff. But the Menshevik members of the Soviet by their silence seemed either to approve, or else to fear to oppose it. Order No. 1 was issued to the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison, and instructed every

soldier to obey only those commands of their officers which were countersigned by the Soldiers' Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. This was the first act which showed that the Soviet delegates were using industrial organization to attain political ends. For the power of the officer class over the soldier was the greatest weapon which the bourgeois Committee of the Imperial Duma or a possible constitutional monarch could use against the worker and soldier mass. The latter knew that unless they could obtain control over the army, no improvement in economic status was possible, and that without the political power no industrial changes could be achieved. The Petrograd Soviet delegates, under pressure from the masses, grasped the political weapon of control over the army as soon as it fell from the hands of the Tsarist aristocracy and before it could be seized by the middle classes. Throughout the summer of 1917 the controversy over Order No. 1 raged. During this time, when the forces of the second Revolution were forming underground and the Menshevik leaders of the Soviet were capitulating before the middle class, the spirit of Order No. 1 was kept alive in thousands of soldiers' committees on the front and in the rear. The power of the middle classes over the army received from this Order a blow from which it never recovered. And this blow was dealt in the very first days of the March Revolution.

How was the Petrograd Soviet in these early days of the Revolution composed? The initiative in forming it came from the hand-workers. These people lived nearest the abyss of hunger and despair. They had the greatest interest in putting an end to the modern industrial system; they were the least respectful of tradition, the least fearful of change, because they had nothing to lose and everything to gain. But it was not uncommon to find elements in the Petrograd Soviet at this time which one would have expected there; such as officers, middle-class journalists, small shopkeepers, advocates and doctors with a middle-class practice. At the first sitting of the Petrograd Soviet only the active revolutionary forces among the hand-workers and soldiers of the garrison sent representatives. Gradually, however, other grades of the proletariat began to be drawn into the Soviet system; the small handicraft worker, the half-proletarian peasant, the shop-assistant, the bank clerk type, etc. These imperfectly organized and politically undeveloped proletarian groups allowed themselves to be dominated by persons not strictly of their class. Thus the Petrograd Soviet during the month that followed the March Revolution gradually began to lose its true working-class character, as the peasants

and brain-workers began to dilute the Soviet with delegates, who were formerly servants of the ruling class. The brain-workers particularly seemed to lack confidence in their own powers, and to be ready to seek representatives among circles standing near to the propertied class. This, after all, was very natural. In their political ideology they called themselves "socialist," but they were always trying to reach their ideal by agreement with the arch-enemy of Socialism. Hence their wavering tactics, ambiguous phrases and hankering after "moderate reforms." Now, in Petrograd these social elements, from the first days of the March Revolution, began to cluster round the Menshevik wing of the Social Democratic Workmen's Party. The representatives of the skilled artisans, the hungry day-labourers, soldiers from the garrisons and sailors of the Baltic Fleet began to find themselves during the spring of 1917 outnumbered in the Soviet by the Menshevik delegates of the intellectual type, who had got in by their influence over the less organized and less politically conscious section of the urban proletariat.

This process of dilution went on even more rapidly in the provinces. In North and Central Russia the small property owner and peasant with his own land were comparatively rare. On the other hand, the undeveloped nature of the country enabled the grain speculator, the timber profiteer, the local steamboat owner, the monopolist proprietor of the only thrashing machine in the countryside to flourish. In the villages these people went by the general name of "kulak." They welcomed the Revolution, not because they hoped it meant a change in the public economy, but because they thought it would free them from all restrictions on the right to levy tribute on the public. Up till March 1917 the Tsarist bureaucracy had got the lion's share of the booty in plundering the Russian workmen and peasants. After March 1917 the anti-social elements outside the bureaucracy sought to take the latter's place. But this could only be done by capturing the political and social organization created by the Revolution. It was necessary for them to get a hold on the Soviet, and in order to do this, they had to get into the political parties that influenced the Soviet. The Socialist Revolutionary Party was particularly suitable for their designs. Around it flocked all those who wanted to make something out of the Revolution. The party had a great tradition. For years it had fought the autocracy by spectacular methods, which included bomb attempts and assassinations. It had been the purveyor of ambiguous but high-sounding phrases about "land and liberty," "peace and the people's will," etc. In a word, it

was the best-known revolutionary organization in the land. Under its banner flocked every conceivable type, including genuine idealists of the lower middle class, parasitical kulak elements, and the great body of those who had little initiative of their own, but were easily influenced by tradition and led by phrases.

Roughly speaking, it would be possible to say that the three Russian working-class parties, the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks during the summer of 1917 represented three distinct groups within the proletariat. The Mensheviks were supported by the brain-workers and by the privileged working-class aristocracy, which, however, thanks to the very small development of Craft Unionism in Tsarist Russia, were an almost negligible factor in the land. The Bolsheviks were supported by the greater part of the skilled workers, by the sailors, by that section of the poorest unskilled labourers who were not under the influence of the middle-class intellectuals, and by that section of the soldiers who had the courage to stand up against their officers. The Socialist Revolutionaries represented the middle and upper layer of the peasantry, a section of the poor peasantry as far as they were politically conscious at this period of the Revolution, the profiteering middleman, small proprietor, the professional man of the country-side and the simple careerist.

The origin of these three revolutionary parties goes far back into Russian history. They can be classified into two groups, denoting two distinct schools of political thought—the Marxian and the non-Marxian. The Marxian based its tactics on certain general ideas, which included the theory of the surplus-value of wealth annexed from labour by the ruling class, the theory of the class-struggle, and the economic interpretation of history. To this Marxian group belonged both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The party which united these wings, called the Russian Social Democratic Workmen's Party, existed up to the November Revolution of 1917. Bolsheviks and Mensheviks differed originally on questions of revolutionary tactics, and most of all on the interpretation of the form and nature of the coming Russian Revolution. The difference first appeared in a serious form at the London Conference of the party in 1903, when the question was raised whether the coming Revolution in Russia would be only a political change, giving power to the middle classes on the ruins of Tsarism, or whether it would be a social change, giving power to the working class and creating through a dictatorship a new economic structure for society. The Mensheviks maintained that an undeveloped country like Russia must not attempt to introduce the Socialist system before other

countries were ripe for the same process. It was necessary for Russia, they said, to mark time, and meanwhile her working and middle classes must find some formula which would tide over the time till events developed in other lands. The March Revolution, they said, was a political one. The Russian middle classes must carry on the government, because the working class could not assume responsibility. The latter must use the Soviet as an instrument for influencing the policy of the middle classes, but must in no way attempt to turn it into an instrument of government. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, held that such tactics would mean the indefinite enslaving of the working classes, because the Russian middle classes were becoming more and more the agents of Western European capitalism, which was not less oppressive and much more efficient than the corrupt feudal oligarchy of Tsarism. Russia, said the Bolsheviks, just because she is economically undeveloped, is less burdened with the social rubbish of ages than the older civilizations of the West. She can all the more easily start out on a new line of social development, and enter at least the first transition stage leading into a Socialist form of society.

The non-Marxian group of the Russian Socialist parties was represented by the Trudoviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. Both of these sprang from the so-called "Zemlya i Volya"—a group of revolutionary intellectuals who came into prominence in Russia in the last half of the nineteenth century. They and the group which sprang from them, the Narodniks, held the theory that Russia had no need to pass through the capitalist system at all in order to reach Socialism. Russia, they said, was an agrarian land with peasant communes, which were themselves a primitive form of Socialism. It would be disastrous to break down this primitive agrarian institution. Such a breakdown, it was contended, would inevitably take place if industrialism was introduced into agriculture, and if modern capitalism, with its division of society into two hostile classes, were to take root in Russia. Like the Slavophiles, the Narodniks held that Russia must be kept free from the influences of the Industrial Revolution. She could reach Socialism, they said, in her own way by developing those primitive relics of the Middle Ages that have survived for the present day. The Narodniks therefore preached "back to the land."

As time passed, and as Russia came more and more under the influence of Western Europe, the ground gradually fell from under the feet of the Narodniks. It became increasingly difficult to preach "no Socialism through Capitalism," when Capitalism was

growing on every side and becoming the sheet anchor of State economy and finance. A change, therefore, came over the whole of this rural-intellectual movement. A group of orthodox descendants of the Narodniks, the Trudoviks, still existed early in 1917, but the driving force of the movement from the beginning of the twentieth century passed to a new party, the Socialist Revolutionaries, who largely modified the original theories. Like the Narodniks, they held that the inspiration and motive force of Russian revolutions must come from the peasants, but they abandoned the hostile attitude of the Narodniks to the urban factory system and to the technique of modern industry. They held, nevertheless, that the labouring peasantry must organize itself politically as a class apart from the workers of the towns, and, through rural land communes, perfected and modernized, must carry Russia onwards to Socialism. But they did not shut their eyes to the fact that alongside of the peasants lived the urban workers, nor did they refuse to co-operate with the latter in moving towards the common ideal.

On the more abstract grounds of political philosophy, also, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Trudoviks differed from the Marxists. The economic factor is the main force in history said the Marxists. The economic factor is only one among many, said the Russian non-Marxian Revolutionary. The influence of human personality was thus accepted by the Socialist Revolutionaries as a force, which was as important in determining history as the influence of material forces acting on man from without. Hence came the more rebellious spirit of the Socialist Revolutionary in comparison with the almost mystic fatalism of the Marxist. And hence the acceptance by the former of the Terror as a legitimate weapon in the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, the Socialist Revolutionary Party has inspired the terrorist acts in Russia for many years past, and in this respect shows itself in strong contrast to the Marxian groups, who condemn individual assassination, and proclaim that they are fighting, not individuals, but institutions.

In spite of their theoretical and tactical differences, however, the Marxian and non-Marxian groups were at this stage of the March Revolution loosely united in a block, which was generally known as the "Revolutionary Democracy" of the Soviet. A common platform united all revolutionary parties—peace between the workers of all lands on the basis of no annexations or indemnities, land for the peasants and the socialization of industry. All parties in the Soviet could agree upon theoretical aims. The careerists and anti-social kulak elements in the Socialist Revolu-

tionary Party dared not openly oppose these aims without risking their places in the Soviet. On the other hand, the greatest disagreement existed among the revolutionary parties on questions of tactics. The theoretical differences that divided the right wing of the Marxists (Mensheviks) from the non-Marxian Socialist Revolutionaries were not such as to prevent co-operation in practice in the Petrograd Soviet. But there was no co-operation in the Soviet between the two wings of the Marxists, the Menshevik right and the Bolshevik left wing, because, although no theoretical difference divided them, they could find no *modus vivendi* on questions of revolutionary tactics. In the early days of the March Revolution the parties within the Soviet had not definitely taken up their relative positions, but by the end of April they were forced to show their hands, for it was then that the bourgeoisie, taking advantage of the international situation, determined to test its power against that of the Soviet.

The leaders of all parties of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet realized from the first that without control over foreign policy there would be no control over internal social policy and no chance of checking the counter-revolution. They knew full well that, as long as military officials could plead "State necessity" as an excuse for interfering with the civil authority, the Revolution would remain a prisoner in the hands of the former and in the hands of foreign chancelleries, who would use it for their own purposes. One of the first acts of the Petrograd Soviet, therefore, was to repudiate the Tsarist secret treaties by sending its appeal to the workers of the world to conclude peace on the basis of no annexations and indemnities. In order to counteract this attempt on the part of the Soviet leaders to break with the old traditions of foreign policy, M. Miliukoff, about the middle of March, issued a statement on his own account to the effect that Russia would remain true to her international obligations. This was followed by his interview with me in Moscow in April (published in the *Manchester Guardian* for April 26th, and referred to in the last chapter), which was clearly meant to tell Labour and the democratic forces in England that the foreign policy of Tsarism was the policy of the Russian Revolution. An official declaration by the Foreign Office on May 2nd, couched in similar terms to the first, showed that the middle-class parties, led by the Cadets in the Provisional Government, had definitely thrown down the glove at the Petrograd Soviet, and defied it to exercise any influence over foreign policy.

The Soviet leaders were thus faced with a serious predicament. If they let M. Miliukoff's challenge pass, they would be in fact

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admitting that the organized workers had no right of control over foreign affairs, which must remain for ever an exclusive preserve of the bourgeoisie. If they acted, they must be prepared to accept the responsibility of government. The Bolshevik section of the Marxian group in the Soviet, holding the view that the Russian Revolution was a social one, welcomed this situation as affording an opportunity of accepting that responsibility, and putting the Petrograd Soviet and, later, the other Workers' Soviets which were springing up throughout the land, into the position of sole director of home and foreign policy. In the sitting of the Petrograd Soviet on May 3rd, at which I was present, the Bolshevik group demanded "All power to the Soviets." This power, they said, the Petrograd Soviet had already had in the first days of the March Revolution, but had let it drop into the hands of the Provisional Government, which was made up of members of the middle-class parties in the old Tsarist Duma. But the Bolsheviks were at this time only a small minority of the Petrograd delegates, and they were confined to the skilled workers of the big metal works and arsenals, the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the yards at Kronstadt and a small part of the Petrograd garrison. The bulk of the Soviet delegates adopted the attitude of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. The latter tried to find some means by which they could influence the foreign policy of the Revolution and control Miliukoff without assuming the full responsibility of government.

The Soviet had meanwhile sent a deputation to demand a clear statement on foreign policy from the Provisional Government, for soldiers and workmen were already parading the Nevsky Prospect with banners on which were inscribed: "Down with Miliukoff! Long live peace between the workers of all lands." In an interview at the Marinsky Palace M. Miliukoff showed M. Tscheidze, the President of the Soviet, a certain letter. A Menshevik member of the delegation subsequently informed the writer that this letter was from the French Minister, M. Ribot, and was written to M. Albert Thomas, who at that time had come to Russia on a special mission from the French Government. M. Thomas had written to M. Ribot requesting information about the French Government's attitude towards the Soviet's peace policy. M. Ribot's letter of reply was put into the hands of M. Miliukoff, and with this the latter now confronted the Soviet delegates. The letter contained passages which declared that France had not altered or modified the aims for which she was fighting; that France sympathized with the

Revolution, but that unless Russia was prepared to remain steadfastly by the Alliance, it would be necessary for France to consider whether she would continue the economic support which she had given Russia hitherto.

This attempt of M. Miliukoff to frighten the Soviet delegates with the wrath of the Allies and with the threat of economic isolation had no success. The delegates insisted on an explanation of the Foreign Office's declaration, which ran counter to all the resolutions of the Soviet. Miliukoff's game was up. He had played his trump-card, the Ribot letter, and it had failed to terrify. From that moment his career as a Minister was doomed.

The processions on the Nevsky Prospect caused the fall of Miliukoff. A few days later he resigned, after publicly stating that he stood by his position, and that his resignation meant no change in policy. It was clear from this that the Cadet Party, if it was compelled to sacrifice its leader, had no intention of abandoning his foreign policy.

Now, since the Petrograd Soviet could not be reduced to impotence by ignoring its existence, and since it was out of the question to talk of a frontal attack upon it, at any rate for the present, it was necessary to cajole it and to give its leaders lucrative places in the Government along with the members of the bourgeoisie. A great outcry was thereupon raised in the middle-class press the day after Miliukoff's resignation about the danger of "dual control." There could not be two Governments, it was said; either the Soviet or the Provisional Government must rule. "The present situation is intolerable," said War Minister Guchkoff at a public meeting in the Alexandrofsky Theatre; "Russia is on the verge of ruin; we, members of the Provisional Government, are practically under arrest; the Soviet points at us, tells the public we are the 'bourgeoisie,' and calls on the people not to obey our orders." A union of classes to overcome the difficulty was therefore demanded; a coalition of parties. This meant a common programme, and during the first week of May an attempt was made to create one, according to the Menshevik theory that labour should co-operate with the middle classes at this stage of the Revolution. The Soviet put forward its terms. It knew that the Provisional Government, relying on the middle classes alone, could not carry on for a day under the then existing conditions. The army was not reliable, as a result of Order No. 1, and there was no possibility of creating "White Guards" or detachments of reliable troops for some time to come. The Soviet was strong enough to ask for almost any terms. It could almost have

adopted the Bolshevik formula—"All power to the Soviet"—if it had dared to accept full responsibility. But the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary delegates of the Petrograd Soviet stuck to their theory of the "political revolution," and decided on a coalition with the middle-class parties. Their terms for entering the Provisional Government were that the latter should be responsible for its actions at first to the Petrograd Soviet, and later to the Executive Committee of the first All-Russian Soviet Congress which was shortly to meet. The Soviet should have power to veto any action of the Coalition Government. The latter was to proceed immediately to secure a declaration from the Allies as to the objects for which they were carrying on the war, and to obtain all facilities for the immediate summoning of an International Socialist Conference at Stockholm.

Thus the principle of Labour's co-operation with the capitalist class was now put on its trial in Russia. Was it possible for the proletariat by democratic control to influence the home and foreign policy of a country? Would the Soviet be able to get the revolutionary peace programme adopted and carried through as long as the bourgeoisie controlled the whole executive apparatus of the State and the bureaucratic machine left by Tsarism? The history of the following six months was to decide these questions. The problem before the parties in the Soviet from this moment onwards was a problem of power and of the tactics by which power could be attained. The mass of opinion in the Soviet centre and right round the Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik groups tended to coalesce. Behind them in the country were those who feared the wealth and influence of the bourgeoisie, those who hoped by democratic control, constitutional methods, speeches, resolutions and protests to break the vast instrument of human oppression, which Tsarism and the foreign embassies had forged for the Russian people. Their parties in the Soviet from this time forward became the so-called "Revolutionary Democracy." Against them a small minority crystallized in the Soviet under the leadership of the Bolshevik group. They were backed in the country by the fanatical, the rebellious and the independent spirits in factory, dockyard and garrison. They now began to murmur the words "All power to the Soviets by direct action." They began to preach openly that, as long as the executive power and the administrative machine was in the hands of their class enemies, no political and social change was possible either in home or in foreign policy. The gradual growth of this idea marked the development of the Revolution after the formation of the First Coalition Government.

CHAPTER III

A VISIT TO KRONSTADT AND THE FIRST SOVIET CONGRESS

THE First Coalition Government of the March Revolution marked the beginning of a temporary set-back in the revolutionary initiative of the Russian proletarian masses. They had not yet awakened to the knowledge of their power, and they allowed the middle classes to retain control over the State bureaucracy and even to capture the new instruments of authority created by the Revolution. Further sufferings, further disappointments, further disillusionment had to come, in order to make them see that only by their own efforts could they free themselves.

In the meantime, however, there were a few rebellious and independent spirits scattered about the land, who already realized that the policy of making the lion and the lamb lie down together could only mean that the lamb would be eaten. Nor was it difficult for these people to get a hearing, for the first object of their attack was the Coalition Government. Now, there has always been an ingrained suspicion in the heart of every Russian against Government authority of any kind, and the origin of this suspicion is to be sought far back in Russian history. The Tsar's authority was based on the old Oriental idea that the temporal ruler was the representative of the Deity on earth. In his care and keeping were the lives, properties, and indeed the souls of his human flock. Those among the sheep who valued freedom of conscience had only one chance of escaping spiritual slavery. They had to flee from authority to the backwoods. In the Middle Ages these independent spirits were generally monks, who retired to their cloister cells. Or they were men who preferred to live the life of an exile, fishing and hunting in far off Petchora forests and remote lakes bordering the Siberian toundras, where their souls could find relief in communion with Nature. Indeed, a large part of Northern Russia was colonized in this way, for what else are the stories of Yermak, Stroganoff, Pugacheff and Stenka Razin but the stories of freedom lovers rebelling against

central authority. They were in fact the Robin Hoods of Russian history.

The second stage of the March Revolution—the period after the formation of the Coalition Government—was not without its Robin Hoods. Already in a few isolated spots, where conditions were particularly favourable for the growth of the independent spirit, working-class communities began to feel that their lot would only then be improved, when they themselves, through their own locally elected industrial councils or Soviets, directed the fortunes of the Revolution. And so it was that by the month of June one began to hear that first here, then there, at Schlussemburg and Kronstadt in the north, at Tsaritzin on the Volga, at Ekaterinodar on the Cossack steppes, at Krasnoyarsk and Kansk in remote Siberia, councils of workmen and soldiers had declared that they would not recognize the authority of the Coalition Government, that they were the sole authority in these places until the coming of the First All-Russian Soviet Congress, or of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly. The independence of some of the local Soviets reached extraordinary proportions during June. In Kharkoff the garrison arrested and locked up its officers and declined to send reinforcements to the front. Soldiers' Soviets at the front organized fraternizing parties with the Germans, and on the south-west front fished with the Bulgarian soldiers on the rivers. But the local Soviets did not confine themselves to home affairs. By way of welcoming the American Root Commission in its task of persuading the Russian Revolution to carry on the war for Constantinople and the left bank of the Rhine, the Kronstadt sailors began about the last week in May to besiege the American Embassy and to insist somewhat forcibly that Ambassador Francis should accompany them to Kronstadt as hostage, until certain guarantees were given. These guarantees were that Tom Mooney, an Irish Anarchist, condemned to death in America on charges of dynamite plots, should be immediately released. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Coalition Government was able to persuade the Kronstadt "comrades" to cease their unpleasant attentions to the person of the American Ambassador.

In consequence of the extraordinary rumours that were current in Petrograd at this time about the "terrorist" regime in Kronstadt, I decided to make a journey to see for myself what was going on there. On a fine June morning at the Vassily Ostroff quay I boarded a little steamer, which sailed down the Neva, past the great dockyards of this "window into Europe," and out into the blue waters of the Gulf of Finland. Soon a long,

low island hove in sight. Situated almost midway between the two coasts, it effectively controlled the passage of ships up to the mouth of the Neva. A few cruisers, naval training ships and fishing boats were clustered under the lee of the island in a little harbour. Factory chimneys told of iron foundry works, and the mounds, serrated against the sky, spoke of the forts guarding the approaches to Petrograd. Here was the famous island fortress, ready to stand a siege, able, thanks to its factories and war stores, to maintain for many weeks an existence independent of the outside world. Kronstadt on that June day, as I approached it by the sea, seemed to breathe a spirit of independence and defiance. And I thought, as I looked on it, of the strange personalities that it had produced in former Russian revolutions, of Father John of Kronstadt and of other political priests.

The steamer arrived, I left the quay, and walked up the main street of the town. I went to the offices of the Kronstadt Soviet, which was the former Naval Officers' Club. I asked to see the President, and was shown into a room, where I found seated a young man who appeared to be a student. He had long hair and dreamy eyes, with the far-off look of an idealist. This was the President of the Kronstadt Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Soviet. "Be seated," he said. "I suppose you have come down from Petrograd to see if all the stories about our terror are true. You will probably have observed that there is nothing extraordinary going on here; we are simply putting this place into order after the tyranny and chaos of the late Tsarist regime. The workmen, soldiers and sailors here find that they can do this job better by themselves than by leaving it to people who call themselves democrats, but are really the friends of the old regime. That is why we have declared the Kronstadt Soviet the supreme authority in the island. We recognize the fact that the Coalition Government exists in Petrograd, just as I recognize the fact that you are sitting in that chair; but that does not mean that we recognize its authority over us."

After further conversation he suggested that I might like to see the fortress and the naval and military prisons, and offered to take me round himself. This student-president and I thereupon went out and walked down the main street. He began to be very friendly and confidential in true Russian style, and, although I had known him for barely half an hour, took my arm and began to tell me about himself and Kronstadt. "I was a student of technology at the Petrograd Institute," he said. "During my studies I had frequent occasion to come down here and see what was going on. You can have no idea of it. The soldiers and

sailors were treated on this island like dogs. They were worked from early morning till late at night. They were not allowed any recreations for fear that they would associate for political purposes. Nowhere could you study the slavery system of capitalist Imperialism better than here. For the smallest misdemeanour a man was put in chains, and if he was found with a Socialist pamphlet in his possession, he was shot. There was terror indeed. The ruling classes of Russia had to keep this regime going in Kronstadt in order to cow the men into submission, for, herded together on this island in a half-communal state, they could so easily combine to overthrow the power of their officers. The latter only kept the system going by a corps of picked gendarmes and a system of spy-provocateurs. A very large percentage of the soldiers and sailors of Kronstadt were drawn from the artizan class and from the better educated type of peasant, who had knowledge of some craft. Most of them could read and write. This fact made Kronstadt one of the most advanced revolutionary centres in Russia."

While talking over these things, we arrived at the big square in front of the cathedral. A large crowd of workmen, soldiers and sailors had gathered here. Presently there came from the cathedral a procession with red banners, and, borne aloft by sailors, some five or six urns. "These are the bones," said my companion, "of some comrades who were executed here after the 1905 Revolution by the Tsarist reaction, because of their revolutionary activities. One of them had attempted to bring food to his comrades who were beleaguered and starved out by the Tsarist gendarmes on a small island off the Finnish coast. Another had attempted to rescue his friend from prison the night before he was to have been executed. We never knew where these comrades were buried, but we found out later that their bodies were thrown into a pit. We found the pit, dug up the bones recently, and are giving honour to those who died for the freedom which we now enjoy." A grave had been dug near the monument of Admiral Mackaroff. Soldiers and sailors spoke a few words in memory of their comrades, and the urns descended into the earth. And yet those men had died eleven years ago. They were personally unknown to all but a very few of the garrison of Kronstadt that day. But they had died for the same cause, the same mystic power had driven them to rebel and to strike a despairing blow for freedom. The feeling of comradeship in arms against a common tyranny had bridged the gap of years and had made these unknown in the flesh, known in the spirit. Such was the magic power that drove the Russian

Revolution. In the breasts of the Kronstadt men was a force which could not be broken, even though two years later the British fleet was to be used to fire upon their forts and try to reduce them again to the slavery from which they freed themselves in March 1917.

We passed on to the prison on the north-east of the island. The sentries gave a friendly nod to the President and said "Good morning, comrade," as we passed them. Inside the iron doors we entered a low room in which, sitting and lying on iron bedsteads, were a number of half-dressed, unshaved, unkempt men. They were the erstwhile satraps of Tsarist might in Kronstadt. There was a naval staff officer—a man over fifty, whose imprisonment had begun to tell on him. "Look at this," he said, as he took my hand and placed it on his projecting hip-bone; "what have I done to deserve this?" I passed on to a major-general, formerly in command of the fortress artillery of Kronstadt. He stood in his shirt-sleeves—no medalled tunic decorated his breast any more, although he had fought at Port Arthur and in the Polish campaign. His red-striped trousers of Prussian blue bore signs of three months' wear in confinement. Sheepishly he looked at me, as if uncertain whether it was dignified for him to tell his troubles to a stray foreigner. "I wish they would bring some indictment against us," he said at length, "for to sit here for three months and not to know what our fate is to be is rather hard." "And I sat here, not three months, but three years," broke in the sailor guard who was taking us round, "and I didn't know what was going to happen to me, although my only offence was that I had been distributing a pamphlet on the life of Karl Marx." Next I came upon a young artillery officer who seemed to take his troubles in a very sportsmanlike way. "I never ill-treated my men," he said, "but they arrested me with a lot of officers whom they had a grudge against, and rightly so, for they treated their men like dogs. I used to have trouble with my brother officers, and indeed they turned me out of the Naval Club, because I protested against some of the things that went on here. And for this I sit alongside with them." Further on I came upon a Vice-Admiral. His spirit seemed very nearly broken, for his face was thin and pale, his voice weak and his hands shaky. "I did my duty to my Tsar," he murmured. "I always served my country and was ready to die for it. I fought in the Japanese war and was wounded twice in this war. If I was strict with my men, it was because I loved the Tsar and my country, and knew that only thus could Russia be great and her people happy"—and so saying he wept.

I was taken to the south side of the island, where in another prison were kept the former military police, gendarmes, police spies and provocateurs of fallen Tsarism. In a low dingy corridor I could see the outline of large, sinewy human forms. Here was a gendarme in that long grey cloak that once was the terror of striking and petitioning masses. In reply to a question he said, "If only they would take us out and put us to do some work! We are strong and can serve our country, whether it is Monarchy or Republic." Beside him was a military policeman. His coarse, heavy features were untouched by any signs either of anger or of repentance. He seemed to be thinking only of food, drink and sleep. A happy existence indeed for a man situated as he was!

At that moment I saw in front of me the lean figure of a man in civilian clothes. His bloodshot eyes, looking out from under dishevelled hair, were like those of a hunted animal that hears the hounds approaching. "So you have come at last," they seemed to say; "am I to be hanged or-shot? or what form of death has been prepared for me?" I was just going to ask him what he used to do and how he came to be there, but at the moment he suddenly vanished into darkness and left me wondering if this might be some Kronstadt Azeff, on whose heels stalked revolutionary justice.

As I passed out of the prison, a bent old women came up to my companion, and with tears in her eyes begged him to give her some news of her only son. He was a gendarme, and on the first day of the Revolution had, with some half-dozen others, occupied the watchtower with machine guns and had swept the main street with a deadly fire, which had laid low three of the revolutionary leaders besides many dockyard labourers. She was a widow, and had no one to earn for her now. She knew nothing of politics, she said, and wanted only peace. The President of the Soviet was touched, and thought for a moment. Human sympathy told him to unbend. Revolutionary discipline told him to be firm. "The whole case of these men is being dealt with," he said. "We are even allowing the Provisional Government to send down a commissioner to examine with us the indictments. Your son will probably be free before long."

I left the prisons and tried to forget what I had seen. For they contained men who were punished for being agents of a cruel system, which was after all their only means of livelihood. There were others who had served that system because they were educated in an atmosphere which made them see nothing but good in it. But these agents of the old regime were now being

punished by men who had suffered far more than they were now inflicting. In fact, my chief wonder was that the new rulers of Kronstadt, after all they had gone through, still retained their human feelings. What a history lay written in those Kronstadt stone walls! Oh for a Dostoeffsky to describe the inmates of those "dead houses"! Oh for a Tolstoy to strike a note of human sympathy!

On the following day I visited the dockyards and foundries of Kronstadt. I found that the first results of the March Revolution had been to call into being the so-called "*fabrichny komitet*," or factory committee, which is the Russian form of "shop stewards." They had extended to the dock-workers in the form of "district unions." These committees and unions were the elementary industrial unit upon which the Soviet idea was based, and in Kronstadt I found them already well developed. They were formed by the men of all grades, skilled and unskilled, who met for half an hour after the day's work. While I was going over the yards and foundries I found the central offices of one of these committees. In the corner of a workshop there was a table and chair and a notebook, in which the secretary set down resolutions and minutes. That was the office. And yet in those unimposing quarters important public work was already being performed. Delegates went forth from this place to the Kronstadt Soviet, which was the *de facto*, if not the *de jure*, political authority on the island, controlling militia, prisons, public services, food supplies, and so on. From here also went forth delegates, who were assuming direct control in industrial affairs. They claimed and exercised the right to inspect the accounts and books of the management, saw to it that no materials left the premises without good reason, and in general ways looked after the welfare of the industry and of its members. These rudimentary proletarian organizations, therefore, had divided their activities into two branches, one political and the other industrial. Both these branches, however, sprang from the same roots.

The factory committees and dock unions which I saw in such active development at Kronstadt were really the fighting organs of the revolutionary workmen. In Petrograd they had, in the first days of the Revolution, been formed out of a few energetic spirits among the skilled artisans. The latter took very easily to the idea of the industrial council, because they had never been in any very large numbers organized into craft unions. The weakness of the craft union movement in Russia under Tsarism greatly facilitated the process of organizing the skilled and unskilled workers together in big industrial unions. The skilled

men were not a privileged caste, claiming all sorts of special rights. On the contrary, they largely took the lead in creating the new factory committees for the control of industry. In Kronstadt, where there was an unusually large number of skilled workers and sailors, the factory committees had reached a high state of efficiency, as early as June 1917. The greatest employer in the island was the State. But, nevertheless, the work of the State officials was subjected to rigid scrutiny, for the men were fully alive to the fact that in a capitalist state the bureaucracy is only the agent of "big business."

But there were also private capitalist concerns in Kronstadt, and chief of these was the cable factory. This, I found, was already under the control of the factory committee. The owner, who had tried to close down the works and to sell some of the machinery to a foreign bank, was arrested, the whole business requisitioned in the name of the Kronstadt Political Soviet, and administered by the factory committee. The latter had actually sent its agents to Petrograd to buy stocks of metal and fittings, and had found the cash for carrying on by deducting a percentage from the men's wages. How long this state of affairs could continue, however, was doubtful. It was clear that some directing hand was needed to co-ordinate the production in the public interest and to prevent the new workers' control from developing into syndicalist ownership and a new form of capitalism. In the meanwhile, however, the Kronstadt dock and metal workers had in their island fortress already broken the power of "big business" and of its ally, the State bureaucracy, and had laid the foundations of a system, which with the necessary provisions for the protection of the public and consumer would conduct industry through the agency of workers' guilds. And now I discovered the real cause of the outcry against Kronstadt in Petrograd bourgeois circles: Kronstadt had gone one stage beyond the rest of the country and was openly threatening the capitalist system.

Before leaving Kronstadt I attended a sitting of the Workers', Soldiers' and Sailors' Soviet, the political body. The sitting took place in the former Naval Officers' Club. In the great salon, where formerly balls and banquets were given, and whose walls were still hung with pictures of the Russian Navy welcoming Tsars and foreign Sovereigns, the Kronstadt Soviet deliberated. The admirals and generals and officers, picked from the flower of the aristocracy who formerly haunted its precincts, were now in the prisons that I had visited that day. Their places were taken by brawny common sailors, lusty great peasant soldiers and horny-handed mechanics, just come from their day's work. A keen and

energetic bunch they were, these Kronstadt sons of toil, who hailed from every part of Russia. The pick of the land, the flower of Russia's revolutionary greatness. No feats of intellect in university or college had these men performed. They had a native instinct, which enabled them to see direct and call a spade a spade, to read the signs of the times and to act, when action was needed. The question on the order of the day was, whether the Coalition Government's Commissioner should be accepted on the island. A debate followed. These men spoke shortly, simply and to the point. Some thought that acceptance of the Commissioner would mean admission of the Coalition Government's authority in Kronstadt. Others thought a compromise could be arranged because the rest of the country was not as yet ready to accept the position taken up by Kronstadt on the matter of Soviet authority. The tone of the debate was throughout moderate, and a compromise was ultimately reached, by which the Commissioner was to be received on the island as the "guest" of the Soviet.

I found on examination that the Bolsheviks were a minority in the Soviet. The greater number of delegates belonged to no party at all. But in actual fact they were doing everything that the Bolsheviks were officially preaching. The Bolshevik leader in Kronstadt said that his party were not going to force events. Time, he said, was working for them. The war and profiteering were reducing Russia to misery and famine and pushing the masses steadily to the Kronstadt position. That process was not yet accomplished, but it would be before many months. Then would be the time to act. Meanwhile, he was willing to wait and watch the interesting little experiments which the working-class masses were making on their own initiative, without any prompting from outside. Kronstadt was, he said, but an early development, due to peculiar local conditions of what would happen throughout the rest of Russia.

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By the first week of June 1917 it became clear that Kronstadt Tsaritzin and Krasnoyarsk were only Bolshevik islands. The rest of the country was following the lead of the parties of compromise. The test came during the elections for the First All-Russian Soviet Congress, which was held at the end of May. I remarked in the last chapter that not long after the formation of the Petrograd Soviet elements that were not strictly proletarian began to creep into it. The same thing happened, but to a greater extent, in the provinces. The corn dealer, who had half his village in debt

to him, would promise not to press for payment, if he got elected to the local Soviet. Among garrisons in the rear and units at the front, doctors, journalists, advocates of middle-class origin, and in a few cases even officers, got elected as delegates for the All-Russian Soviet Congress in Petrograd. They succeeded at the polls because they promised that the war would soon be over. Doubt as to the capacity of the Mensheviks and of the Socialist Revolutionaries to carry out their promises of peace without annexations or indemnities, land for the peasants, and workers' control of industry, was not seriously entertained by anyone, except by a few far-sighted revolutionary veterans in Kronstadt and in a few of the Petrograd factories. The Revolutionary Democratic Block had entered the Coalition Government on the understanding that certain very definite conditions would be observed. The first of them was a direct statement should be obtained from the Allies that they accepted the revolutionary peace programme; the second was that the International Socialist Conference should be summoned immediately. That was enough to satisfy most people at that time. So the workmen in the provincial towns, the peasants in the villages and the soldiers of the garrisons outside Petrograd supported the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionaries. It was no surprise, therefore, that on the day of the opening of the Congress the following delegates turned up: Socialist Revolutionaries 321, Mensheviks 247, Bolsheviks 107, Non-party 73, Jewish Bund 10, Narodniks 5, Anarchist 1.

The opening day of this first Labour Parliament of Russia was very memorable. From an early hour in the morning the corridors and halls of the Naval Cadet Corps in the Vassily Ostroff were filled with delegates arriving from East and West. Each group as it arrived bore the mark of the region from which it hailed. Here was a picturesque group of Ukrainians round a samovar and an accordion. There was a group of sunburnt soldiers from the garrisons in Central Asia. There were some dark-eyed natives from the Caucasus. There were lusty soldiers from the trenches, and serious-looking officers; there were artisans from the Moscow factories and mining representatives from the Don. In the central hall, where the Congress was held, this raw material of different nationalities and climates was worked up into the political finished article. There they began to split up into their different party sections.

The first item on the order of the day was a resolution of confidence in the Coalition Government. This was moved on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet

by the Menshevik M. Lieber. The Russian Revolution, he said, was like no other that had yet taken place in Europe, for in its inception it was an uprising of the masses against their capitalist and landlord rulers. But in trying to solve the class problem by revolution, the masses had come up against the class problem in Western Europe, which was not yet ripe for settlement on these lines. Two problems therefore lay before the Russian "Revolutionary Democracy." First in the sphere of foreign affairs it must bring the war to an end as soon as possible on the basis of an international agreement. There must be no victory of one alliance over another, for the war must end in the victory of the working classes of all countries over the capitalists and Imperialists of all countries. The second problem was the internal reorganization of Russia. They were now in the midst of a long process of development. The bourgeois Provisional Government, formed after the fall of Tsarism, was left high and dry and had nothing to rest upon. The old regime had gone. The vast masses of the workers, peasants and soldiers were organizing themselves and working out their programmes in their own way. It was necessary that the Soviet should send representatives into the Government in order to protect the interests of those who had made and were still making the Revolution.

Next came forward Tseretelli, the leader of the Mensheviks and one of the new Ministers in the Coalition Government. A spare thin man with a dark complexion, he was a typical representative of the Caucasian Socialists, and was looked upon at the time as one of the great figures in the March Revolution. It was a curious coincidence that he had been called upon to lead the workmen and peasants of Great Russia, for, after all, the economic problems of the purely agrarian and pastoral land of the Transcaucasus are very different from those of Central Russia. Moreover, strange as it may seem, the Caucasian revolutionaries have a far less fiery temperament than their Russian comrades. This is probably explained by the fact that the revolutionary movement in the Caucasus sprang for the most part from the small middle classes, whereas in Russia the movement derived its strength from the proletarian mass. "The Russian Revolution," Tseretelli began, "in lifting up the standard of peace for all the world has also to take upon itself the burden of a war, begun by other Governments, the ending of which does not depend upon it alone. Here is the great and fundamental difficulty which faces the Revolution. Nevertheless, we know that in order to secure the safety of the Revolution, it is necessary to break with the Imperialist policies of the past." But how, he

asked, was this to be done? Were the old diplomatic channels of any more use? Could the Russian Democracy trust its fate to the European chancelleries that made this war? The answer was clear. By way of diplomatic negotiations and treaties of the old order questions of world importance could not now be decided. "Our problem therefore is," he said, "to set before the Governments and peoples of the world the lessons of the Russian Revolution. We must approach the Allied Governments and, above all, avoid a breach with them, for a Russia isolated would mean a Russia forced to a separate peace. But a separate peace is not only undesirable, it is impossible; for to come out of one alliance in the war would only mean to enter another." If, therefore, a separate peace was impossible, it was necessary to convince the Allies of the justice of the Revolution's ideals. A conference was already being called by the Coalition Government, and the Allies were being asked to state their war aims. Let them begin with the Allies, and let the results of their labours in that quarter influence the comrades in Germany. Turning to the question of the army, Tseretelli told his hearers that they must be ready to assume the offensive, in order to defend the ideals of the Revolution. They would be fighting now, not for the conquests of Tsars' Government, nor for any other Government, but to carry the banner of brotherhood throughout the world. And with these words the Menshevik leader concluded his thoughtful speech.

There now arose from an obscure corner of the room a thick-set little man with a round bald head and small Tartar eyes. He was leading a small group of delegates who had set themselves down on the extreme left and at the back of the hall. Nobody seemed to pay much attention to the corner where they sat, for there was a general impression that here had congregated the extremists, irreconcilables and faddists of all types, who were forming a little "cave of Adullam." But as soon as this short, thick-set little man rose and strode with firm step, and even firmer look upon his countenance, up the gangway, where sat the serried ranks of the "Revolutionary Democracy," a hush came upon the whole assembly. For it was Lenin, the leader of that small, insignificant Bolshevik minority at this First All-Russian Soviet Congress. No uncertain words came from his lips. Straight to the point he went from the first moment of his speech and pursued his opponents with merciless logic. "Where are we?" he began, stretching out his short arms and looking questioningly at his audience. "What is this Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates? Is there anything like it in the world? No, of

course not, because nothing so absurd as this exists in any country to-day except in Russia. Then let us have either one of two things : either a bourgeois Government with its plans of so-called social reforms on paper, such as exists in every other country now, or let us have that Government which *you* (pointing to Tseretelli) seem to long for, but which you apparently have not the courage to bring into existence, a Government of the proletariat which had its historic parallel in 1792 in France."

"Look at this anarchy, which we now have in Russia," he went on. "What does it mean? Do you really think you can create a socialist form of society with the assistance of the capitalists? Can Tseretelli's fine plan for persuading the bourgeois Governments of Western Europe to come to our point of view on the peace settlement ever succeed? No, it will fail ignominiously, as long as power is not in the hands of the Russian proletariat. Look at what you are doing," he cried, pointing a scornful finger at the Socialist Ministers: "Capitalists with 800 per cent. war profits are walking about the country just as they were under Tsarism. Why don't you publish the figures of their profits, arrest some of them and keep them looked up for a bit, even though you may keep them under the same luxurious conditions as you keep Nicolas Romanoff. You talk about peace without annexations. Put that principle into practice here in Finland and the Ukraine. You talk to us of an offensive on the front against the Germans. We are not against war on principle. We are only against a capitalist war for capitalist ends, and until you take the government entirely into your hands and oust the bourgeoisie you are only the tools of those who have brought this disaster upon the world." And so saying he returned to his obscure corner amidst yells of delight from his followers and derisive laughter from the delegates of the "Revolutionary Democracy."

There was then another hush in the hall, as there rose up a short man with a square face and close-cropped hair. He wore a brown jacket and gaiters, his face was pale with nervous tension, and his eyes blazed like fiery beads. It was Kerensky, the popular hero of the moment, who was believed to be about to lead the Russian Revolution to the successful realization of its ideals, who was expected to bring land to the hungry peasants, land and peace to the weary soldiers without annexations or indemnities. Standing bolt upright, with his right arm clasping the button of his breast pocket, he began his speech in quiet, measured tones. "We have just been given some historical parallels," he said. "We have been referred to 1792 as an example of how we should carry out the Revolution of 1917. But how did the French Republic

of 1792 end? It turned into a base Imperialism, which set back the progress of democracy for many a long year. Our duty is to prevent this very thing from happening so that our comrades who have just come back from exile in Siberia shall not have to go back there, and so that *that* comrade," he said, pointing a scornful finger at Lenin, "who has been living all this time in safety in Switzerland, shall not have to fly back there. He proposes a new and wonderful recipe for our Revolution: we are to arrest a handful of Russian capitalists. Comrades! I am not a Marxist, but I think I understand Socialism better than Comrade Lenin, and I know that Karl Marx never proposed such methods of Oriental despotism. I am accused of opposing national aspirations in Finland and the Ukraine and of reducing the principle of peace without annexations to ridicule by my action in the Coalition Government. But in the first Duma it was *he*," he said, turning savagely on Lenin, "who attacked *me* when I stood up for a federal republic and national autonomy; it was *he*, who called the Socialist Revolutionaries and Trudoviks dreamers and Utopianists."

Turning to the point about fraternizing on the front, he evoked a storm of laughter by referring to the naïve people who imagined that by friendly meetings between a few parties of German and Russian soldiers it is possible to usher in the dawn of Socialism throughout the world. "They will have to be careful," he added, "or else they will find out one day that they are fraternizing with the mailed fist of William Hohenzollern." His face flushed, and his voice became harsher with excitement, as he braced himself up for his peroration. "You tell us you fear reaction," he almost screamed, "and yet you propose to lead us the way of France in 1792. Instead of appealing for reconstruction, you clamour for destruction. Out of the fiery chaos that you wish to make will arise, like a Phoenix, a dictator." He paused and walked slowly across the platform, till he was opposite the corner where the group surrounding Lenin was seated. Not a sound was heard in the hall, as we waited breathlessly for the next sentence. "I will not be the dictator that you are trying to create," and so saying he turned his back upon Lenin. The latter was calmly stroking his chin, apparently wondering whether the words of Kerensky would come true, and on whose shoulders the cloak of dictatorship, if it came, would rest.

The debate was continued by the leader of the Socialist Revolutionaries, Victor Tchernoff. "Comrades," he began, "the tragedy of the Russian Revolution is the insufferable

circumstances in which it was born. It is surrounded by the fiery ring of war. It has established its political position at home. Can it secure its international position abroad? For we see that the longer the war goes on the greater become its economic difficulties. The war is a great pump which sucks out the strength of the country. Here is the danger, and one all the greater because no one knows, if the Revolution can live through it."

He then proceeded to dissect the argument of Lenin and to show that his idea of social revolution throughout the world was too feeble a reed for the Russian Revolution to lean upon. There was reason to think that in the lands where capitalism was firmly established the revolutionary movement was hanging fire, while in economically undeveloped countries it had gone furiously ahead. "We cannot remove these circumstances by a single appeal to the world," he continued, "nor ought we to look upon capitalism as a purely economic phenomenon. The history of recent years shows that capitalism has a very strong national character, and that its influence has penetrated the proletariat of many countries. If this be so, does not a serious question arise? Will the Russian Revolution spread outside the narrow limits of its national existence? or will it spend its energy and expire? or can it, by strengthening itself at home, wait till the time is ripe in the rest of the world? Can it, in other words, give an object lesson to the comrades in other lands? The world has been astonished by our Revolution in the midst of war. Let us astonish the world still further by the later stages of its growth. The Russian Revolution is acting as a lever which is slowly moving the forces of Socialism throughout the world, and by its summons to the International it will lay the foundations of a peace, freed from all traces of Imperialism. It will destroy the old methods of secret diplomacy and secret treaties and make it no longer possible for millions to be slaughtered for the benefit of the few. Our hope is no longer in diplomatic embassies but in the democracy of the Allied countries. The next task which the Russian 'Revolutionary Democracy' will accomplish is the meeting of the Socialist International of all countries." And with these words the whole audience, with the exception of the little irreconcilable group in the obscure corner of the hall, rose to their feet and cheered the Socialist Revolutionary leader for several minutes. The President rang his bell, and the assembled Soviet delegates filed out for the division. The resolution of confidence in the Coalition Government was passed by a majority of 543 to 126. The

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Block of the "Revolutionary" Democracy in the Soviet was thus secured.

The following weeks were to show whether the confidence of the masses in the Coalition was to be retained, or whether the scepticism of Kronstadt as to the ability of the Russian "Revolutionary Democracy" to persuade Western Europe by words alone had its justification before the hard facts of life.

CHAPTER IV

COLLAPSE OF FIRST COALITION

It was soon clear that the First Coalition Government had an almost hopeless task before it. If the army was to be held together, and if the class struggle was to be prevented from assuming a form which would spell the break-up of the geographic unity of Russia, then the programme of the "Revolutionary Democracy," as set forth by the Block at the First All-Russian Soviet Congress, would have to be carried out in spirit and in letter. Kerensky, as War Minister in the First Coalition, was undoubtedly popular with the soldiers both at the front and in the rear. But that popularity was only accorded to him because he was conceived as the personification of the new spirit in Russia, which had brought to life and was expected to realize the revolutionary peace programme. In order to show the Russian masses that the Revolution was something more than an empty phrase, that Tsarist secret treaties were a thing of the past, that the war, which in the mind of the masses was inextricably connected with Tsarism and oppression, was not to be kept going one minute for the purpose of annexations by Russia's Allies, it had been arranged that the Socialists of the moderate Block in the Soviet should enter the Coalition Government as a pledge that this programme should be carried out. It was Kerensky's business to tell the soldiers that no sacrifice would be demanded from them, unless it was in the interests of peace without annexations or indemnities and with the right of self-determination of nationalities. It was the business of his colleagues in the Soviet to see that the Allies accepted this programme in principle. A failure to secure this would mean that the Russian soldiers would lose confidence in the avowals of the Allies that they were fighting Prussian militarism for purely disinterested motives. It would mean also that sooner or later the army would break up and go home. For it must be borne in mind that the Russian peasants, far less than the workmen in England and France, felt the proximity and danger of foreign invasion. Moreover, being for the most

part illiterate, they had not been poisoned with the atrocity propaganda of the middle-class press, which was so great a weapon in the capitalist armoury of other belligerent countries.

Anyone who carefully studied the undercurrents of feeling in Russia at this time would have known that a most delicate situation was facing the Allies, and one requiring the exercise of all their tact and wisdom. It was, in fact, possible for them to use this Russian Revolution as an agent of propaganda in Germany, which would have encouraged the revolutionary element there and have tended towards the isolation of the Prussian military camarilla in its own land. The chance that the revolutionary spirit would spread to Germany and weaken the "will to victory" was undoubtedly great. It is referred to by Ludendorff in his *War Memories*. For although the Prussian War Lords welcomed the break-up of the old Russian army, they regarded with dread the possibility of a proletarian dictatorship and a Red Army next door to the suffering and war-weary masses of Germany. Nor did the earlier more moderate aspects, which the revolutionary movement assumed between March and October 1917, present much attraction to such people as Ludendorff. If Bolshevik Red Armies were inventions of Beelzebub, International Stockholm Conferences, organized by the Mensheviks, were inventions of one of the lesser devils. "We walked into a trap of the Entente; I was against these journeys," Ludendorff writes in connection with the attendance of delegates of the German Socialist parties at the preliminary sittings of the Stockholm Conference committees. Indeed, the Reichstag resolutions and the "peace feelers," which emanated from London and Berlin and went *via* the Vatican during the summer of 1917, were in reality nothing else but the attempts of middle-class respectability in the West to wrest the initiative for peace negotiations out of the hands of those political elements in Europe which were trying to make the end of the war coincide with the beginning of a new social era.¹

¹ This interpretation is confirmed by recent evidence. An article in the German semi-official *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* for February 29, 1920, by ex-Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, gives an account of an interview which the Papal Nuncio had on June 29, 1917, with the Kaiser at German Headquarters. At this interview the Kaiser said that he welcomed the steps taken by the Pope towards peace. "The international organization of the Church," he said, "made her the body best adapted to propagate the idea of peace in a war between so many nations. The other great international organization," he continued, "that of the Socialists, had well understood the importance of this propaganda. If, therefore, one saw the danger of allowing the Socialists to act alone and wanted to prevent it, then

By the spring of 1917 it was clear that the Soviets were running a foreign policy which was endangering the secret treaties. The Allies, therefore, had to reckon with a new enemy, dangerous in ideas, as the Prussian enemy was dangerous with the sword. Indeed, both the belligerent Imperialist alliances in Europe were inclined to overhaul their war plans during the summer of 1917, and even to whisper to each other furtively about peace possibilities. As has now been established, secret negotiations were going on at this time between the Allies and Austria with the object of drawing the latter away from alliance with Germany. They broke down, because Germany was sufficiently strong as yet to hold Austria in leading strings. Other unofficial peace offensives were made at this time and might be attributed to "real politicians" both in England and Germany, who, feeling that the war was "past its dead-centre," and was now threatening the economic stability of Europe, hoped to arrange a peace between the two Imperialist camps at the expense of the Russian Revolution. A great deal of attention at this time in Russia was paid to a speech of Mr. Lloyd George, in which he hinted that, if Germany wanted peace, she had better make her terms with Russia. It was clear that both the Governments of the Allies and of the Central Powers felt uneasy about the spread of the ideas on foreign policy propagated by the Russian Soviets. Both seem independently of each other to have come to the decision that the Stockholm Socialist Conference must be stopped. Hence one had the amazing spectacle of the Allied Governments scouting the Stockholm Conference, because it was "an instrument of German intrigue," and of the Prussian military leaders scouting it because it was "an Allied trap."

The reason why peace was not made during the summer of 1917 between the Allies and Germany, at the expense of the Russian Revolution, has still to be disclosed. It is certain, however, that by the middle of June 1917 the Allies had decided that the German Imperialists were for the moment at any rate a greater danger than the Russian Revolutionaries. They were doubtless influenced in their decision by the fact that the Soviets after their first Congress had got into the hands of those Socialist parties in Russia who were ready to compromise and who were not prepared to carry their convictions to their logical conclusions. The relative weakness of the Bolsheviki and the relative

the Catholic Church should be asked to step in. It was in the interests of the Church—and he, as a Protestant prince recognized it—that the way to peace should be prepared not by the Socialists, but by the Pope."

insignificance of the "Kronstadt oases" encouraged them to believe that after all they had got the Russian Revolution in their pockets, and could afford to continue the war with the German Imperialists on the basis of the secret treaties.

And so the idea of an offensive against Germany began to be assiduously propagated in the Russian middle-class press towards the end of June, and the incentive for this came from the many Allied "missions" in Petrograd.

The reason for the offensive was not military at all. It was known to the Russian bourgeoisie and to the Allied military missions that the Russian army was incapable of an advance, and that, even if it occupied enemy territory, it had not the necessary technical equipment to hold what it had gained. The reasons were purely political. It was hoped by the offensive to rally the small middle classes and the intellectuals, who had already got a strong hold on the Soviets through the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary parties, to the big bourgeoisie and to the war programme of the Allies. If the offensive was successful, a wave of patriotism would sweep these small middle classes away to the Right and isolate the "Kronstadters" and the Bolsheviks. If the offensive failed, it would be possible to plead its failure as an excuse for re-establishing the death sentence and the "Nagauka" regime of Tsarism in the army. Anyone carefully studying the Russian bourgeois press in these days would have been able to convince himself that the real motive at the back of the July offensive was to hit, not at the Germans, but at the internal enemy.

The decision to commence an offensive on the front against the Germans was taken by the bourgeois members of the Coalition Government on the insistence of the middle-class parties. The ground had been carefully prepared by the Allied missions beforehand; hints were given that economic help would be forthcoming, if Russia "showed she was in earnest." The presence of the Root Commission standing in the background was very cleverly used to give the impression that America was there to proffer large assistance, and that the fear of exhaustion as the result of continuing the war was not justified.

The Socialist members of the Government meanwhile acted as Socialists in coalition with the middle classes generally do: they stood by and abandoned the principles which they had been sent into the Government to defend. At a closed sitting of the Presidium of the First All-Russian Soviet Congress in the last week of June, the Menshevik leader, Tseretelli, capitulated to the demands of the bourgeois parties in the Govern-

ment, headed by the Cadets. The latter had demanded from the Soviet its consent not only to the offensive at the front, but also to the disarming of a part of the Petrograd garrison, the sending of the rest to the firing line, its replacement by "reliable" Cossacks and officers' battalions and the disarming of all workmen within the Petrograd area.^{*} Tseretelli carried his resolution through the Presidium, and so obtained the official sanction of the Soviet for the policy of the bourgeois parties. But this act was fatal to the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet. If it had meant what it professed, it would have demanded, before it gave any such sanction, the fulfilment of the conditions upon which it had sent its members into the Coalition Government. At this critical moment the Soviet was entitled to guarantees that the Allies officially would agree to the summoning of the Stockholm Conference. They had a right also to demand a statement of the peace conditions in accordance with the Revolution's programme. These guarantees and statements should have been obtained before the offensive was agreed to. But the precious moment was allowed to go by. After it had passed, it was possible for the bourgeois members of the Coalition Government to say that the "Soviet" had given tacit assent to the offensive; it was also possible for the Bolsheviks to say the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet had betrayed the workers and soldiers by not insisting on the fulfilment of the conditions upon which the First Coalition was formed.

The advanced wing of the Petrograd and Kronstadt Soviets and all those elements that stood outside the "Revolutionary Democratic" Block were not slow to take advantage of this situation. The Bolsheviks and the Anarchists knew that the intrigue for an offensive on the front and the capitulation of the Menshevik Ministers would in the long run only bring water to turn their mill. Before the First All-Russian Soviet Congress had finished its work a movement was started to bring the workmen and garrison of Petrograd out on the streets to demonstrate against the Coalition Government. The initiative for this came from the Anarchists, who, as if to force events, proceeded with a few armed bands to occupy the printing press of the bourgeois paper, *Russkaya Volya* and also the fine villa of Durnovo in the Northern suburbs of the city. This move was taken with the object of impressing the Government with the fact that there would be trouble, if the offensive plan was proceeded

^{*} This information was given to the writer at the time by one who was present.

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with. But it was no less intended to force the hands of the Bolsheviks, who at that moment were uncertain what tactics to adopt. It was finally decided to test the feeling of the workers and the garrison by organizing a great demonstration of protest. In this the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists were at one, for they both favoured the tactics of influencing public opinion by mass demonstrations. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, faced with this movement of the Petrograd workmen and garrison, at first held back and refused to countenance the demonstrations. But just as the Bolsheviks were pushed by the Anarchists, so the Block in the Soviet in turn was pushed by these two, and finally, in order to avoid losing all control over the masses, the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries agreed to organize the demonstrations themselves.

A great procession was arranged for July 1st. From factories, workshops and barracks the masses turned out in thousands, and from eleven o'clock in the morning to late in the afternoon an unending stream passed over the field of Mars before the graves of those who had fallen in the March days. The demonstrators, in spite of the fact that they were led by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, bore the banners and inscriptions of the Bolsheviks. The majority of them called upon the soldier by direct action to make peace in the trenches with the German soldier, who was invited to revolt from his officer. Only a few Menshevik banners appealed to "constitutional" methods of obtaining a general democratic peace by way of the Stockholm Conference. But already it was clear that as far as the Petrograd masses were concerned Stockholm was beginning to lose its importance. It was also very interesting to notice that several banners which were carried by Bolshevik groups contained the inscriptions, "Down with the capitalist Government of Kerensky! All power to the Soviets, in order to guarantee the meeting of the Constituent Assembly!"

The day following the great procession, July 2nd, was one of the landmarks in the history of the Revolution. At midday news arrived that Kerensky had succeeded in getting the army on the south-west front to commence an offensive against the Austrian lines. In the course of the morning a whole series of trenches and villages were in Russian hands. The psychological effect in Petrograd was instantaneous. The thousands of war-weary workers, who for over three years had been reading General Staff reports of military operations, which were to "free them from Germany," and who had come to the conclusion that, whatever the results of the war, *they* would remain poor and miserable,

unless they took their fate into their own hands—these thousands, who had demonstrated the day before for an international peace of reconciliation between peoples, now suddenly saw all their hopes vanish, and became silent. In the Petrograd Soviet the adherents of the Block of the "Revolutionary Democracy" looked grave and said nothing. Their official organ, the *Izvestia*, came out with a long, tame article, half apologizing for the offensive, but excusing itself by adding that, after all, it was not a question of principle, it was a technical matter, which must be left to the military specialists to decide. Nevertheless, the article pleaded, the commencement of the offensive testified to a military union between the Revolution and the Allies; there should therefore be a true political union also. Russia had done her part, the Allies must now do theirs.

Too late! The "Revolutionary Democracy" had walked into the trap. It had not insisted on the fulfilment of the conditions on which the First Coalition was formed, because it half trusted, half feared, the Russian bourgeoisie and the Allied Embassies. Hamlet-like, it had uttered good intentions, noble wishes, but when the moment came to act, it had drawn back in horror. The drama of the Revolution was now to be continued by others more clear-minded and determined. The offensive of July 2nd was the first signal for "Revolutionary Democracy's" decline.

In the camp of the Russian bourgeoisie on this day there were pæans of joy. Well-dressed crowds began to collect round the office of the *Novaya Vremya* to read the extra telegrams. Processions began to form of officers and students. They bore red banners, but very different from those which had been seen on the previous day. Now the cry was: "War to complete victory! Long live our noble Allies! Confidence in the Coalition Government!" Officers dressed up as common soldiers tried to create an impression on the public by haranging groups of people from the steps of the Kazan Cathedral. A great attraction for these preachers of the bourgeoisie were the women's battalions at the Krasnoye Zamok, where a number of village girls were being drilled. These so-called "women's death battalions" had been formed from money subscribed by rich persons, and were to "stiffen" the army at the front. On this occasion they were used to trot before war-worn warriors, who after four years' suffering were lingering in Petrograd in hopes that the Stockholm Conference would enable them to return home legally. The idea appeared to be that the speakers should point upon these poor girls, who through their poverty had allowed them-

selves to be prostituted for this purpose, and should say to the weary ones, "Aren't you ashamed of yourselves for shirking, while women go to the front?"

But what were the working masses thinking? I obtained some idea of this a couple of days after the commencement of the offensive, when I visited the Baltic Fleet in Helsingfors. I had occasion to be taken down to a meeting in the fortress of Sveaborg of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Councils of part of the fleet and garrison. In a large wooden shed in the middle of a rocky island representatives from the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were speaking to an audience, which consisted of delegates from all the battleships, cruisers, destroyers and garrison artillery of the Helsingfors area. The speakers were dealing in general terms with the preparations for the Stockholm Conference. When they had finished, there was a long and embarrassing pause. Then someone asked why the Soviet was not keeping the "Capitalist Ministers" in the Coalition in order. Another asked what guarantee there was that Russian soldiers' and sailors' blood was not being spilt for Imperialist annexations of the Allied Governments. A third asked if the offensive would be interpreted in the Allied countries as meaning that Russia had given up her revolutionary peace programme. To all these questions Menshevik speakers replied by referring to the coming International Socialist Conference at Stockholm as the guarantee that Russian blood would not be spilt for Imperialist aims. "But what if the Stockholm Conference is sabotaged?" persisted a voice. "The presence of the nominees of the 'Revolutionary Democracy' in the Coalition is the guarantee that the Conference will take place," replied a Socialist Revolutionary speaker. Sullen and apparently unconvinced, the soldiers and sailors dispersed to their several duties. In the evening, as I was waiting in the hall of the Helsingfors Soviet, I heard that the crews of three battleships had just passed a resolution calling upon the Baltic Fleet to steam up to Petrograd and demonstrate against the "Capitalist Government" for shedding Russian blood in the interest of the English and French ruling classes. A member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party was immediately despatched by the Soviet to go down to the ships and persuade the crews to abandon their attitude. I had occasion to accompany him. After dashing across the blue waters of the sound in a motor launch for twenty minutes, we reached the disaffected battleships. An officer without a shoulder-strap received us and passed us on to the members of the ship's Soviet, who were clearly the only authority on board that mattered. The delegate

from Helsingfors protested that such action as that proposed in the resolution would only bring civil war on Russia. "Those will be responsible for civil war," came the reply, "who have betrayed the people that trusted in them." "Will the Englishman say if the British Government accepts the principle of peace without annexations and indemnities and the right of self-determination?" said a great brawny sailor pointing at me. I replied that, as far as I knew, no official acceptance of the principles of the Russian peace programme had been made by any of Russia's Allies, and that for my part I doubted if they would be accepted. The meeting continued stormily, and at one time it looked as if both I and the Socialist Revolutionary delegate were going to be arrested and held as hostages for the good behaviour of the Allies and the Coalition Government of Russia. The hotheads on this battleship were, however, soon cooled by the news arriving that the rest of the Fleet would take action against them if they tried to force events. We therefore left in peace.

The advance of the south-west army continued for a few days. Halitch and Stanislaus were taken by the Russians. But storm clouds were gathering on the horizon. Not only were the soldiers of the garrisons in the rear refusing to go up to the front and the workmen of Petrograd refusing to give up the arms they had got, but also moderate democratic and small middle-class elements among the nationalities on the western fringe of Russia were becoming restive. The Ukraine and Finland were now centres of disaffection. In both Helsingfors and Kieff there were representative parties and groups which, while having nothing in common with Bolshevism and Revolutionary Socialism, were nevertheless bitterly hostile to old Imperialist Russia and suspicious of the Kerensky Coalition, which they regarded as Tsarism in disguise. The intellectuals, professional men and small middle classes of these border states, who had in times past been hindered in the exercise of their capacities by the dead hand of Tsarist Petrograd, and who had welcomed the March Revolution as heralding the end of the war and the chance of free national development, began now to fear that after all nothing had happened, that Kerensky was only a tool of the Allies, and under the pretext of continuing the war to crush Prussian militarism, was going to bring about a restoration. And so it happened that many elements, who were by no means Bolshevik, acted at this moment together with Lenin. The Finnish and Ukrainian national democratic parties began to put forward demands for autonomy, which bordered on inde-

pendence. They were supported in these demands by the Bolsheviks and by other advanced revolutionary elements in Great Russia itself, not because the Bolsheviks had any real sympathy with the nationalist aspirations of this petty bourgeoisie, but because they saw in them another weapon for attacking the Great Russian counter-revolution and the foreign Imperialism supporting it. The week after the commencement of the offensive on the south-west front the Finnish Social Democrats introduced into the Diet a Bill guaranteeing to Finland complete independence in internal affairs. Foreign affairs were to be controlled by a mixed commission of Russians and Finns. A similar move took place at Kieff, where the Ukrainian Rada, or "Council of the National Democratic Parties," issued a "Universal," declaring the autonomy of the six provinces of south-west Russia. Immediately the Central Soviet at Petrograd despatched two of its members, Avksentieff to Finland and Tseretelli to the Ukraine. As representatives of the "Revolutionary Democratic" Block they believed that the Russian Revolution could be saved without the Bolshevik methods of direct action and without breaking up Russia into its component nationalities. They therefore opposed "premature" attempts at autonomy and independence on the grounds that a Constituent Assembly would create a federal democratic Russia. But both Avksentieff and Tseretelli returned without convincing the nationalists of the Ukraine and Finland, who were now crying "Away from the Great Russian counter-revolution! Down with the war begun by the Tsar and continued by the Tsar's Allies!"

I remember very well an interview I had at this time with a member of the then Finnish Government, a leader of the Social Democrats, Senator Tokoi. "The Soviets, I fear, have very little influence on the Coalition Government in Russia," he began; "Kerensky is completely in the hands of England and France. Russia is forced to continue the war without guarantees. This means that the same strategic considerations, which governed the attitude of Tsarist Russia towards the border democracies, will of necessity influence the Coalition Government. Finland's internal development has been hindered, because while not actually at war, she has been forced to incur heavy expenses as the result of the military occupation of Finland by Russian troops. With finances burdened in this way we cannot introduce the social reforms needed by our people. Therefore, we consider that Finland has a right to, at any rate, internal independence." And this was typical of the attitude of democrats in the border states at this time.

The break-up of the First Coalition Government began on July 15th. The Cadet members of the Ministry precipitated the crisis by resigning on the ground that the opposition of the Soviet and the decentralization tendencies of the border states were weakening Russia's power to carry on the war. At the eleventh hour, when the offensive had already begun, "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet had seen fit to take some dilatory measures against the sabotage of the Revolution carried on by the bourgeois members of the Coalition Government. The Central Soviet Executive demanded the removal of M. Manuiloff, the Minister of Education, who had taken no steps since he had been in office to alter in the smallest degree the school system which existed under Tsarism. It also demanded that the Minister of Trade, M. Konovaloff, should do something to ensure state control over the key industries. It was characteristic, however, that it took no steps to secure the fulfilment of the pledges on foreign policy, to which it was committed. As a counterblow to this belated attack the Cadets in the Cabinet resigned in a block. Now came the fatal question. Would the "Revolutionary Democratic" Block in the Central Soviet regard this coup of the chief Russian bourgeois party as proof that the *alliance sacr  * was no longer possible? If so, would it consider the time had now come for the Soviet to assume control over the Government, as the Bolsheviks and their allies in the factories and the Baltic Fleet were demanding? That question had now to be answered.

A few days later, July 20th, the suppressed indignation of the garrison and of the mass of the Petrograd workers at the double game which had been played on them behind their backs since the day when they had demonstrated on the field of Mars came to a head. As usually happens, when the political atmosphere is charged, a spark from any quarter sets the magazine alight. There was in Petrograd at this moment a number of forty-year-old soldiers, who had been released for field work in the northern provinces. They had been ordered to return to take part in the offensive. Imagine the effect that this order of the Coalition Government had on these men. After three years of suffering and misery in fighting for hated Tsarism, they had been told that peace was at hand. A few days in their home, working at the harvest, in their domestic haunts with their families, had but whetted their appetite for peace. Now suddenly they were ordered to return without any hope being offered them that the end of the war was within measurable distance. It is necessary to understand the psychology of these

men in order to grasp the true significance of what happened afterwards in Petrograd and in other parts of the country. Out on the streets these forty-year soldiers, together with the machine gun division, went, spurred on by a blind feeling that they must have it out with their rulers, who had betrayed them. The first people with whom they wanted to settle accounts were the "Revolutionary Democratic" Block in the Soviet. So to the Taurida Palace they went, and on the way were joined by parties of equally indignant workmen from the factories. The Kronstadt sailors, impatient as ever and hearing with joy that Petrograd at last was moving, sent up a boat-load of their comrades to reinforce the demonstration. On the way they stopped at the Bolshevik headquarters near the Petropavlovsk fortress, where they dragged out Lenin and called for a speech. The latter, faced with an accomplished fact, told them to demonstrate peaceably under the watchword, "All power to the Soviets." By midday a great crowd had gathered before the Taurida Palace. The leaders of the Soviet Block were called upon to come out. They did so, and were met with cries, "All power to the Workers and Soldiers." Deputations were sent in asking if the Soviet would assume the government of the Revolution in place of the Coalition, wrecked by the resignation of the Cadets. Now came the fatal moment. Would the "Revolutionary Democratic" Block answer that question and assume power? As time went by and no answer was forthcoming, the attitude of the soldiers, sailors and workmen, became more and more menacing. Indignant Demos was out and rampant. The Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary leaders could hear him roaring from the seclusion of their committee rooms. They sat up all night, torn in their minds between the angry bull of Bolshevism and the hungry tiger of Bourgeoisdom. The hours went by; they found themselves unable to escape, and had to settle down to a state of siege for the night. Still they could reach no decision. They knew a coalition on the old basis was discredited and gone. They were terrified of seeing the power fall into the hands of the bourgeoisie, from whom it had been wrenched in the very rooms where they sat by the revolting workers and soldiers in the first days of the Revolution. But they were even more terrified of assuming power themselves. Therefore they decided to propitiate both sides. They ended, however, in irritating everybody. Unhappy "Revolutionary Democracy!" The path it was trying to walk was becoming narrower and narrower, and two bottomless abysses lay upon each side.

But neither did Demos, in spite of his indignation, know

how to act. "Revolutionary Democracy" hesitated, but no one dared suggest that it should be kicked out of the Taurida Palace and replaced by a revolutionary committee, nominated on the spot by Demos. Moreover, rumours got about that not all the garrison were enthusiastic, some regiments holding themselves "neutral" in fact. Kerensky, indeed, was reported to have got some reliable Cossacks and recruits from the Cadet Corps ready to fight "anarchy," and to have called the Volhynia Regiment from the front to come to Petrograd, because it was thought "reliable." The indignation of Demos had not reached the point where everything is staked on one throw; enthusiasm was not so great as to warrant *va-banque* being played and consequences being damned. The crowds began to melt away from the Palace and to amuse themselves in riding about in armoured cars, shooting in the air with machine guns, in the hope that Kerensky might hear the voice of the proletariat protesting against the offensive and against the disarming of the workers, and demanding peace without annexations. But Kerensky did not hear, nor did his generals, erstwhile servants of the Tsar. Least of all did the foreign Embassies hear. And so it fizzled out, this premature and futile ebullition of Russia's revolutionary might. Indignant Demos must tarry a little; his time had not yet come. Attempting a trial of strength too early, he had received a first defeat and also a first lesson.

But the Russian bourgeoisie and the Allied Embassies had won a Pyrrhic victory. In trying to utilize the revolutionary spirit in the Russian army for their own advantages, they made a false reckoning, and still further broke the army up. On July 27th I was present at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, at which reports were made by the delegates of the different army Soviets at the front. The reports threw a flood of light on the state of mind of the army on the eve of the offensive. It was, according to the speakers, only with the greatest difficulty that Kerensky had been able to bring off the offensive at all. The speakers from the Cadets and other bourgeois parties, who tried to persuade the soldiers to attack, were in many places hissed, ducked in ponds, and even had to bolt for their lives. Kerensky, helped by the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionary leaders of the soldiers' trench councils, was the only man able to make any impression at all, and even he only managed to get a hearing by promising that this advance would really be the last one, and that then peace would be assured. He was, according to the speakers, continually met with interjections, such as, "Tell us what we are fighting for!" The Germans,

during the fraternizations, had very cleverly suggested and insinuated to the Russian soldiers that they were fighting for the Allies, who had concluded a number of secret treaties with the Tsar's Government. Kerensky was continually being asked what these secret treaties contained. He was asked if the Coalition Government repudiated the Russian side of the bargain and renounced Russia's claims to Constantinople. But he could only reply that, until the Allied Governments published their side of the secret treaties, it would be a breach of courtesy on the part of the Coalition Government to do so. Again, he could only plead that the Stockholm Conference would bring these treaties into the light of day.

At last, after the greatest trouble, Kerensky, by the strength of his personality, succeeded in inducing a part of the army to agree to this last offensive. The regiments that were ready to advance were separated and strengthened by special storming battalions, made up of officers and Cadets, the Tartar "wild division" and Cossacks. The rest of the army, however, flatly declined to move a yard, said it was tired of the war, and wanted to go home and divide up the landlord's land.

Under these conditions, continued the speakers, the offensive began. The surprised Austrians were pushed back some score of miles, and some villages and towns were taken. But then the question arose: Would reinforcements come up to relieve those troops that had struck the blow? Hours passed, no reinforcements, no food and no ammunition came up. The Germans, hurrying forces to the Austrians' help, commenced a counter-attack, and the Russian line collapsed like a pack of cards. Then followed a general *sauve qui peut*, in which excesses and pogroms took place. The worst of these was at Tarnopol, where the fleeing Russian soldiers sacked the town. The Tarnopol pogrom was trumpeted abroad in the Russian bourgeois press, which from now onwards began to praise the "enemy" German troops for their courage and discipline, and to cover with abuse its own soldiers. What better proof that class feeling was gradually overcoming national pride? After the sitting I spoke with the delegates from the front. They assured me that the direct influence of the Bolsheviks and the Anarchists at the front was very small indeed. The soldiers had been taught by the bourgeois press to regard the Bolsheviks as German agents, and paid no attention to their agitators when they appeared. It was even unsafe for Bolsheviks to show themselves on some parts of the front. But the remarkable thing was that the very men who would curse Lenin as a German agent, would be

doing the very thing that Lenin advised them to do, namely, put down their arms, fraternize with the Germans, discuss Socialism and the expropriation of landlords. The breakdown on the south-west front was the blow that knocked the bottom finally out of the First Coalition Government. Kerensky was isolated; Hamlet-like, "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet had good intentions and nothing more; counter-revolution in the persons of Tsarist generals was mobilizing; Bolsheviks defeated above ground were working harder than ever underneath. Meanwhile bread rations were falling in the towns, railway trains getting more and more crowded, industries closing down for lack of material. Everyone felt that Russia was nearing the edge of a bottomless pit.

CHAPTER V

COUNTER-REVOLUTION MOBILIZES ROUND THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

THREE events of July 1917 stand conspicuously in my memory. The first was the rise, as if from the dead, of the four Dumas; the second was the capitulation of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet; and the third was the ever increasing, and, by now, very perceptible, intervention in Russia's affairs of the foreign Embassies and Missions. All these factors played their part in the events which followed the collapse at the front, the break-up of the First and the formation of the Second Coalition Government. All of them prepared the way for the Korniloff adventure.

On July 24th the representatives who had sat in the four Imperial Dumas under Tsarism met in the Taurida Palace. This fact alone was most significant, for not since the Revolution had those bodies, elected on the most reactionary franchise in Europe, dared to show their faces. Now, all of a sudden, they considered themselves entitled to speak for the "Russian people." And what they said on this occasion was most instructive. I remember attending one of the sittings of the four Dumas. First spoke the notorious Jew-baiter Purushkevitch, who demanded the immediate abolition of the Soviets and the declaration of martial law throughout the land. The equally notorious Monarchist, Shulgin, thought that even a coalition with the moderate Socialists of the "Revolutionary Democracy" was too compromising. The Cadet speaker, Rodichef, was for giving the military complete power to form a Government. But the President, Rodzianko, with an eye to the practical, considered that the Revolution had set up institutions which could not be removed by the mere passing of resolutions. He pointed the way to the Constituent Assembly. But the bulk of the members would not hear of it. As long as the war was going on it was the duty of the citizen to concentrate upon that war, and not to worry about democratic elections. The latter, it

was said, would give a majority which would not be patriotic enough for a time like this, and which would devote itself to dispossessing landlords and putting factory-owners under control instead of winning the war. The attitude of the four Dumas on the question of the Constituent Assembly was an excellent confirmation of the theory that parliamentary institutions are, like Soviets, instruments of class dictatorship. In July 1917 the Russian middle classes would not hear of the Constituent Assembly, because they knew they could not control it. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were ready to accept it, because they knew that they could use it as an instrument for establishing the dictatorship of the urban workmen and the landless peasants.

While the four Dumas were thundering, Kerensky was busy trying to build a new Coalition Government. It was soon clear that the basis on which the new coalition was going to be constructed would be a different one from the last. The middle-class parties had tasted blood and were out for more. The Soviet had now to fight hard to secure any representation at all in the Government. In order to clear the air, Kerensky summoned a conference at the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva on August 5th. The representatives of the Cadets, the Moscow Industrialists, the four Dumas and the Central Executive of the Soviet were present. The Cadets and their allies stood firm and demanded their pound of flesh. The First Coalition, they said, which was built up by admitting the right of the workers' and peasants' Soviets to control the Government administration, had collapsed; it was open to the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviets to take over the Government themselves; since they did not do so, since in fact they asked the middle-class parties to participate—all right; the latter would agree, but—at a price. And that price was that no Minister should be responsible to any outside political party or institution. "As long as the influence of irresponsible bodies is exercised upon the Provisional Government," said M. Miliukoff on behalf of the Cadets, "my Party will have nothing to do with the Second Coalition. Whom does Tscheidze represent? Only a mischievous group of demagogues, relying on a rabble." "And whom do you represent?" calmly retorted the Soviet leader. "Nothing but a mischievous group of reactionaries, relying on foreign Imperialists." But "Revolutionary Democracy" confined itself, Girondin-like, to noble words. When it came to the point, it recoiled in horror at assuming responsibility for a Government of proletarian dictators. It accepted

the Cadet conditions, which were that the members of the new Coalition should be "responsible to their consciences alone"—a convenient phrase indeed, especially for those whose consciences were elastic. All that was left to the Soviet was the right to interpellate its members in the Government, who once a week were to give a report of their activities.

At five o'clock in the morning I walked away from the closing scenes of the conference in the Winter Palace through the great hall overlooking the Neva. In this hall not a year ago the Romanoff Tsar used to dine with all the majesty of Imperial power. Now in the same spot the former subjects of fallen majesty were contending for the right of succession. The attendants in the palace rooms were lying about sleeping on the floor. Glasses of half-drunk tea without sugar lay scattered over a table, where some hours before we had snatched a hasty meal. As we passed out of the Palace, that silvery northern light which illuminates the midsummer night, was touching the outlines of the great Petropavlovsk fortress and painting the waters of the Neva with a brush of azure. Petrograd in all its summer glories had seen the creation of the Second Coalition Government of Revolutionary Russia. But what was going on across those quivering waters in the dark side-streets of the Vassily Ostroff? Demos in commune with "Comrade Lenin" was preparing something which was later to make the world pause and consider.

As soon as the Second Coalition was an established fact, the attacks from the Right on the programme of the Revolution increased in intensity. A careful observer could see that the strands of the counter-revolutionary net could be traced to the Embassies and Missions of the Allied Powers in Petrograd. It is no exaggeration to say that one of the most serious blows at the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet, which helped to make a second Revolution inevitable, came direct from the Allies. Early in August the cables informed us that Mr. Lloyd George had stated in a speech in Parliament that it was doubtful if the Russian Provisional Government was, after all, favourable to the Stockholm Conference, I shall not readily forget the sensation which this speech caused in Russia. The "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet now had a taste of what "coalition" with the Cadets and the Dumas meant. For, as it turned out, the old Russian Embassy in London, a heritage of Tsarist times, in reply to a query from the British Foreign Office as to the attitude of the Provisional Government on the Stockholm Conference, gave its own opinion and that of its

friends on the Right side of the Second Coalition Government as though it were the opinion of Kerensky and of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet. On August 3rd I had an interview with Tseretelli, the Menshevik leader and Minister of Posts, after a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, and he gave me clearly to understand that there was no difference of opinion between the Soviet and the Second Coalition Government on the question of the necessity of the Stockholm Conference, and that if a communication casting doubt upon this point had reached London from official Russian sources, nothing was known about it in responsible quarters in Petrograd. It was clear, however, that there were irresponsible quarters, both in Petrograd and in London, who, encouraged by the capitulation of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the formation of the Second Coalition Government, had felt the time was ripe to assume the offensive in the region also of foreign politics.

About a week later the news came that the Allied Governments had definitely refused passports to the members of their respective Socialist and Labour Parties for the Stockholm Conference. It was most interesting to watch the effects of this announcement on the different sections of public opinion in Russia. It was accepted with wild enthusiasm by the middle-class press of Petrograd and Moscow. Thank heaven! The Allies have at last put a stop to the "German intriguing," which is calculated only to sap the will of the Russian people to win the war! First, complete victory over Germany with the aid of our noble Allies, and then there can be talk of peace without annexations or indemnities! Such was the tone of the articles that appeared. A general sense of relief was expressed in private conversation that, thanks to the Allies, the revolutionary peace programme had received the knock-out blow, and that the chance was opening up of making the Revolution what the middle class had intended it from the first to be—namely, a reshuffling of political power, which would lead to a more vigorous prosecution of the war.

There was also joy in another camp. The Bolsheviks saw in this development the logical working out in practice of all their theories. The World War was, they said, the clash of two great "finance capital" Blocks, which were striving for world domination over undeveloped races, and were using the tremendous physical power embodied in their respective militarisms to achieve these ends. Of course, neither of these militarisms could tolerate the Stockholm Conference, where the working classes of all nations, both under the revolutionary and the moderate

"reformist" banners, would draw up common programmes to end the war and the system which created it. Stockholm Conferences could not take place with the consent of Imperialist Governments, because the latter dare not allow the psychological nationalist frontiers by which the proletariat were divided to be broken down. Those who wanted peace would have to make it themselves with enemy soldiers in the trenches. Those who wanted to destroy artificial frontiers would have to do so, not by passing resolutions of protest, but by acting. Such was the reasoning of the Bolsheviks. Hence their joy at the successful intrigues of the Allies, which led to the breakdown of the Stockholm Conference plans. "Revolutionary Democracy" alone was sad. But then "Revolutionary Democracy" was getting to count for very little now. Its days, even in the Soviet, were numbered.

Once the Stockholm Conference was disposed of, the foreign Embassies in Petrograd felt themselves free to act. Russia, they still seemed to think, could be brought into line with the rest of the Allies and be made to "emancipate itself" from Germany by tying itself still tighter to the war chariot of the Entente. But in order to do this, "sound opinion" must be created. Unfortunately, Maxim Gorky happened to be running a paper at this time, the *Novaya Zhizn*, which complained very strongly that the Second Coalition was prostituting the Revolution to foreign Powers, who were waging a war for their own secret aims and were using the Russian people as their tools. This troublesome newspaper, of course, had to mend its ways. A decree, therefore, was hastily drawn up and submitted to the Cabinet forbidding any newspaper to "insult our Allies" on pain of fine and confiscation. Sir George Buchanan then issued a statement to the press setting forth the causes which led the Allies so nobly to sacrifice themselves in the war on the altar of justice and humanity. The statement was a summary of the negotiations leading up to the outbreak of the war based on the English White Book. I remember a comment on this literary effort of the British Embassy by an old woman who was reading it in a newspaper in the tram: "All the same," she said dryly, "whether we are under the Germans or the Allies, we shall be cold and hungry in the coming winter."

The counter-revolution soon acquired headquarters, from which it could back up diplomatic *démarches* of foreign Embassies with a certain amount of real power. The General Staff had been making itself during the previous month or six weeks a central bureau for monarchist generals and reactionary politicians,

who saw in it the possible instrument for clearing "Revolutionary Democracy" out of the Soviets, Bolshevik "Demos" out of the side streets, and Socialist dilettanti of all sorts and conditions, bag and baggage, out of existence. Already, during the last week in July, when the Second Coalition Government decided to remove the Tsar from Tsarskoye Solo to Tobolsk, the General Staff began spreading reports that the garrison of Tsarskoye were indignant at the proposal and were marching the streets of that small town singing monarchist songs. There was not a word of truth in the reports, but they served their purpose. Earlier in August the General Staff became more daring. General Korniloff, who, after the July disorders and the failure of the offensive, had been appointed Commander-in-Chief with power to re-establish the death penalty at the front, became now the chief personality in the military camarilla. His adjutant had just arrived from England with a large sum of money. Every facility for his journey was afforded by the British authorities. This adjutant, shortly after his arrival, got into touch with the League of the Cavaliers of St. George. A number of the members of this League had taken rooms at the Hôtel National in Moscow, where they became a centre for all "patriots," who were going to "regenerate" Russia. They all looked upon Korniloff as the instrument for carrying out their plans.

On August 18th the middle-class press in Petrograd and Moscow reported that Korniloff was coming to the capital to present a number of demands to Kerensky concerning the functions of the Soviets. These demands, it was even said, would assume the form of an ultimatum. On August 19th Korniloff arrived in Petrograd. The middle-class press spread reports about attempts upon his train by members of the Soviets, and pointed in a veiled manner to the necessity of abolishing these bodies altogether. At the same time the Moscow millionaire, Ryabushinsky, presiding at a conference of the Industrialists in Moscow, referred to the Soviets as a "gang of thieves, led by Jews," and pointed to the need for a strong man. Kerensky saw Korniloff. The General's nerve, apparently, failed him at the moment, so that he decided to postpone whatever demands he was going to present. It was decided that the whole matter of the Soviets and their powers should be left to a State Conference of all "live elements in the country," which Kerensky was summoning in Moscow for August 25th. This Conference was to make a supreme attempt to bridge the ever widening gap between the classes and to find some common "national programme." The question on everyone's lips now was: Could

such a conference be got together, and if so, could it succeed in its task?

No sooner did the rumour get abroad that Kerensky was calling a State Conference in Moscow than the reactionary forces round the General Staff and the editors of the middle-class press began to compete with the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviets for means to dominate it. While the latter sought to do so by securing a majority representation in the Conference, the former commenced a noisy press campaign and prepared military demonstrations with the object of overawing the delegates. While the *Russkoye Slovo* and *Utro Rosseye* acclaimed Korniloff as the "strong man," the bravos of the League of Cavaliers of St. George thought fit to accord him a semi-royal welcome at the Moscow railway station. But fear of the militia of Moscow, who were under the authority of a municipal council, with a Socialist Revolutionary and Menshevik majority, finally caused them to remove suspicions by giving the whole affair a religious turn. Korniloff was therefore conducted to the Iberian icon at the Kremlin gate, where he prayed for the regeneration of Russia.

I arrived at Moscow on the afternoon of August 24th and found alarming rumours going about the city. It was said that three regiments of Cossacks had been ordered up from the front by Korniloff on the pretext of guaranteeing the safety of the Moscow Conference from Bolshevik plots. On the following day this rumour proved to have been true, but the Moscow Soviet had got wind of the move and, on its own authority, had instructed the Soviet at Kaluga, the town through which these Cossacks were to pass on their way to Moscow, to stop all eastward moving trains till further notice. This was done with the assistance of the railwaymen without any reference to the Commissioners of the Coalition Government. On the morning of the opening of the Moscow State Conference the bourgeois papers assumed a most threatening tone. They demanded that the Conference should give the Coalition Government *carte blanche* to restore "order" in the country, and to carry on the war "in full union with our noble Allies." The atmosphere was electric. One instinctively felt that unseen powers were at work, one acting from the Right and the other from the Left. The work of the latter was seen early that morning (August 25th), for, as I went out into the street, I observed that no trams were running. Moreover, I soon heard that no factories were working, for a one-day strike had been declared by the workmen under the influence of the Bolsheviks,

who, driven underground, were nevertheless showing now what power they possessed. Their leaflets, moreover, denounced the State Conference as a fraud, invented by Kerensky to deceive the workers, since it was composed of bodies which were either openly or secretly counter-revolutionary. It was interesting, however, to observe that nine out of ten of the Moscow workmen at this time were for the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, and regarded the Bolsheviks as German agents. Yet they instinctively followed the advice printed in Bolshevik leaflets and struck to a man for one day. This, indeed, was a serious blow to the prestige of the State Conference. It had been called together in Moscow because it was thought that here it would be free from the disturbing influence of revolutionary Petrograd. No place, in fact, seemed now to be safe from the bacillus.

The hour for the opening of the great Conference, which was to make the last attempt to save Russia, came. The delegates were summoned by the Coalition from various public bodies in proportions which were fixed quite arbitrarily. The Soviets were given 30 per cent. of the seats, the co-operative societies 10 per cent., the professional alliances (trade unions) 5 per cent., sundry associations of free professions 10 per cent., the reactionary four Dumas 15 per cent., the middle-class parties 15 per cent., and the Alliance of Cities and "Zemstvos" the remainder. There was to be no voting, but each group was to put forward a speaker, who was to give its idea on a common national programme. At the end of the speeches it was to be seen if a working basis between all classes could be arrived at. Inside the great theatre the spectacle was brilliant. The whole of the right side of the stalls was filled with the representatives of the four Dumas and the middle-class parties—all respectable people with frock-coats and collars. On the left came the Soviet delegates of the unshaven chin and the working-day shirt, with a fair sprinkling of common soldiers. In the middle, as if crushed between two millstones, came the co-operators and the free professional associations. In the boxes and the balcony sat the groups of the small nationalities and various officers' associations. In the former Imperial box sat the diplomatic representatives of the foreign Powers and the agents of the Allied Military Missions. On the platform were the Ministers of the Provisional Government, and behind them the press delegates and visitors.

About two o'clock Kerensky rose on the platform. "The State Conference opens," he began in a rasping voice. "The

Coalition Government expects that it will be the centre from which our country will receive new inspiration in accomplishing its heavy task. All who truly love their country expect that the State Conference will find a way to unite all the healthy elements in Russia." Turning to the groups of the Left, he uttered a warning to those who were sowing doctrines of anarchy and undermining the idea of the State. Turning to the groups of the Right, he declared that the Coalition Government would tolerate no attempt to usurp its authority—a clear hint to the officers of St. George and the groups around Korniloff. After Kerensky came a whole series of official utterances by Ministers of the Coalition Government, who spoke of the need for "sacrifice of citizens for the country," of "patriotic duty," of the "proper recognition of Russia's interests," and other phrases. The delegates began to yawn. Why not tell the truth? I seemed to hear some persons on the left of the hall saying to themselves. Why not say that the half-starving workers of Russia are physically incapable of carrying on a great war in the interests of secret treaties, made by Tsardom? Why not add that the landless peasantry have not suffered for three years in order to continue landless? But then I looked over at the Imperial box, where the representatives of the Allies were seated, and wondered if they understood what the Left side of the Conference was thinking. On the following day the really important speeches began. First upon the tribune mounted General Alexeieff, a short, thick little man, well over middle age. He was dressed in the uniform of the General Staff, of which he had been Chief at the time of the late Emperor's abdication. The subject of his speech was the state of the Russian army, for the supplies and equipment of which he was at the moment responsible. He pointed out that the Russian army had been improperly equipped from the very commencement of the war. He described how the old Tsarist bureaucracy to a large extent bore the responsibility for this, because it had hindered the work of the voluntary middle-class organizations, like the Union of Cities and "Zemstvos" which supplied what the bureaucracy could not. But that was not the only cause of the weakness of the Russian army, he went on to say. Russia was lacking in industrial power to develop her great resources, and had not the technical equipment to enable her to carry on a long war. The Brusiloff offensive, he said, in June 1916 was unable to attain its strategical objectives, because of this lack of technical equipment to guarantee its rear. Then followed a sentence which struck me as being of extraordinary importance: "The

Russian army," he said, "has not been capable of assuming the offensive since the summer of 1916." One wondered on hearing this whether he was reproaching the Allies for not having made good on the eastern front what was lacking in equipment, or whether he was hinting that Russia was not capable of carrying on war against a first-class European Power, and must therefore shortly make peace. In any case, General Alexeieff's speech at the Moscow Conference was the best evidence that I have ever heard that the Bolsheviks were not responsible for the conditions in the Russian army during 1917, because those conditions had been in existence long before the Bolsheviks were ever heard of.

There was a profound hush in the theatre while Kerensky's voice was heard saying: "I call upon the Commander-in-Chief in the field, General Korniloff." Upon the tribune rose a wiry little man with strong Tartar features. He wore a general's full-dress uniform with a sword and red-striped trousers. His speech was begun in a blunt soldierly manner by a declaration that he had nothing to do with politics. He had come there, he said, to tell the truth about the condition of the Russian army. Discipline had simply ceased to exist. The army was becoming nothing more than a rabble. Soldiers stole the property, not only of the State, but also of private citizens, and scoured the country plundering and terrorizing. The Russian army was becoming a greater danger to the peaceful population of the western provinces than any invading German army could be. Thereupon there were cries from the Soviet benches of, "You officers are responsible," followed by uproar. Kerensky rose, and amid dead silence asked the Conference to receive with sorrow rather than with anger the Commander-in-Chief's description of a great national tragedy. Abandoning the combative strain, General Korniloff began more objectively to review the situation and made a series of astonishing revelations. The stocks of food and forage, he said, were so low and the transport in the rear so inferior that not only had an offensive been impossible for a long time past, but it was doubtful whether the army could be demobilized in an orderly manner. Everyone held his breath at this statement. Here, from the mouth of an Entente-phil Commander-in-Chief, one heard that in actual fact Russia could no longer continue the war! He then referred to the Soviets as institutions the value of which "should be recognized," but whose "spheres of activity should be strictly defined." The impression left on my mind was that Korniloff was honestly trying to find a way out of the impasse, but that

he was being pushed by unseen powers behind him, and that he was vain enough to allow himself to be flattered by them.

Next upon the tribune mounted the arch-priest of the military counter-revolution among the Cossacks, General Kaledin. A finely-built man with classical features, he wore the uniform of the Ataman of the Don Cossacks. There was no mistaking his views as to the way to restore the fighting capacity of the Russian army. "The Council of the Alliance of Cossacks," he said, "demands from the Coalition Government that all Soviets shall be immediately abolished both on the front and in the rear." A simple recipe to suppress the whole revolutionary movement, both moderate and extreme, by Bismarckian methods. It was quite immaterial whether the members of the Soviet were Bolsheviks, Mensheviks or Socialist Revolutionaries. They all had to go, both "Revolutionary Democracy" and Demos.

What would "Revolutionary Democracy" have to say to this deliberate attempt to call it out to battle? All eyes were upon Tscheidze, the Menshevik President of the All-Russian Soviet Executive, as he rose to speak. "Although I happen to be President of the very body which the last speaker has been kind enough to consider abolished," he began, "I nevertheless make use of the opportunity of reminding him of the fact that it still exists. The Soviet of Russian Workers, Peasants and Soldiers represents that force in the country which has carried through the Revolution, and which alone can guarantee its safe development. It will resist all attempts to deprive it of its just rights of control. It alone has prevented the country from sinking into anarchy. How often have officers, like Generals Korniloff and Kaledin, been protected by it from the excesses of undisciplined soldiery?" Tscheidze then proceeded to read a long resolution, which had been drawn up by the Central Soviet Executive. The terms of the resolution were an example of moderation. Indeed, it seemed to suggest undue deference, if not cringing. It summoned all democratic and patriotic elements in the country to find a common platform, and said that on the side of the "Revolutionary Democracy" the will to mutual co-operation between the classes would not be wanting. The resolution passed over in a few ambiguous words the questions that were troubling the minds of all—the war, the economic collapse of the country and the land hunger of the peasantry. Peace on a democratic basis was desirable, so was State control over industry, and the land should be free for all. But what should be done to secure these ends? To this question no answer

was forthcoming. "Revolutionary Democracy," smitten on the right cheek, seemed to be trying to reconcile its enemies by turning to them the left one also.

Next I remember a speech by the well-known Cadet leader Maklakoff, who in his effort to interpret the meaning of the Russian Revolution entered the region of political philosophy. "What is the Russian Revolution?" he began. "Some regard it as a social upheaval, which shall give privilege to one class of society over another. But no great movement can bear fruit, unless it embraces the whole community in which it arises. The Russian Revolution was made by the whole Russian people. Therefore no class has the right to monopolize it. It is an uprising of the nation to save itself. Russia does not love the Revolution because it is a Revolution, Russia only loves the Revolution because it knows it saved her." Union of classes upon a national programme! But where was the programme? Where was the practical basis upon which classes could unite? Again we felt no nearer to the solution than after Tschaidze had spoken on behalf of the "Revolutionary Democracy."

Towards evening on this day came an extraordinary scene. Tseretelli on behalf of the Soviet rose to speak. In one of his persuasive, reasoned speeches he appealed to all sides to sink their differences. "We, of the Soviet," he exclaimed, "are ready to co-operate at all times with all elements in the community that show themselves sincerely ready to save the country and the Revolution. The moment has come when all live forces in the country are needed. Who are ready to give their services to the common cause? I know that a favourable answer will come from this quarter," he said, pointing to the left side of the theatre; "will it come from that quarter?" and so saying he pointed to the right side, where the members of the four Dumas and the middle-class parties sat. As soon as Tseretelli had finished, Bublikoff rose to speak. He was the man who, as Minister of Communications in the Provisional Government, had stopped the troop trains which the Tsar had sent to Petrograd to crush the Revolution. "We have listened to the noble words of your honoured leader," he said, turning to the Soviet delegates; "they shall not go unanswered. If Russia can produce that type of man on your side, it can also upon ours"—and, as he left the tribune, he went up to Tseretelli and shook him warmly by the hands. An indescribable burst of enthusiasm came over the great gathering. It almost seemed as if the great days at the very beginning of the Revolution in March had come again, when all classes and parties were rejoicing

in common at the fall of Tsardom. Had a golden bridge been found at last, I wondered to myself, to span the gap between the classes? or was this the last flicker in the dying embers of Russian national unity, fanned by the chance words of two noble personalities?

The chasm remained unbridged. As evidence of this came the speech of Comrade Ryazanoff, who spoke, as he said, on behalf of the group on the "extreme Left in the Soviet"—in other words, on behalf of the Bolsheviks. For no one in this group dared to come out in the open at this moment and call himself a Bolshevik, in spite of the fact that his opinions were being secretly shared by nine-tenths of the working population—as witness the twenty-four hours' general strike going on outside the Conference hall. Such, however, was the pogrom psychology, artificially created by the bourgeois press against the Bolsheviks, that the appearance of the latter in public under their true label was impossible. "We are waiting," said Ryazanoff, "for the time which we know cannot be long. If what the Commander-in-Chief tells us about the condition of the army be correct, then we may expect that the war on the east front will automatically liquidate itself before many months are over. It is not for us to advise either of you two groups on the Right and on the Left what to do. We of the extreme Left are simply waiting with folded hands." Stony silence greeted these words.

Then followed a wild scene, throwing into relief the bitter antagonisms that lay beneath the smooth surface of Conference phrases. In the midst of it the Tseretelli-Bublikoff hand-shake became the memory of a lost ideal. For the personalities who held the strings behind Korniloff, and who had their fingers in the money-bag that came from England, were now speaking. "We accuse you," said Lieutenant Sacharoff, of the League of the Cross of St. George, as he turned savagely on the Soviet delegates, "of making cowardly peace propaganda. I and my brother officers have been wounded many times in this war, and we know what death is. But you whine in civilian clothes for peace without annexations and indemnities." There was immense tension as Esaul Nagaeff, a young Cossack soldier from the ranks, rose to speak on behalf of the Cossack Workers' Section of the Soviet. Dressed in the plain tunic of a Cossack of the "restful Don," he turned towards the box where General Kaledin, surrounded by officers of the League of the Cross of St. George, was seated and courageously looked him straight in the face. In his fiery glance I seemed to see the Russian spirit

of rebellion against class privilege and oppression—the spirit “that despises suffering, tyranny and death.” “I tell you, General Kaledin, from this tribune,” he said quietly and firmly, “do not dare to speak in the name of the working Cossacks and troopers of the rank and file. We delegates of the Cossack Workers’ Soviet, which is daily increasing in numbers and influence, repudiate your authority, usurped behind our backs.” “Traitor! Arrest him! How many German marks did he get for this speech?” came from the box where the Cavaliers of St. George were seated. A scene of indescribable confusion followed. The whole of the left body of the hall rose, yelled and shook their fists at the officers and generals. After several minutes of deafening uproar, Kerensky’s voice could be heard, half screaming for silence. “As chairman of the State Conference,” he said, “I call upon the person who uttered that remark from the box to come forward and apologize.” There was dead silence, as everyone’s eyes were turned upon the spot where General Kaledin and the Cavaliers of St. George sat. The General sat calm and stolid. His conscience was evidently clear. But most of the Cavaliers of St. George had vanished—no one knew where. After a few minutes Kerensky quietly said, “Esaul Nagaëff, I hope you are satisfied with the silence of a coward.” A deafening cheer sounded throughout the theatre, and Nagaëff finished his speech without further interruption.

But the die was cast. It was clear after three days of the Conference that reconciliation between “Revolutionary Democracy” in the Soviet and the representatives of the Russian bourgeoisie was impossible. One of them would have to ignore the other and assume authority in the State, or else both would have to make way for those people who had brought off the twenty-four hours’ strike in Moscow. And so it came about that, when the resolutions from all the different groups were handed in, no common programme could be found—only barren phrases about patriotism, democracy and duty. There was nothing for Kerensky to do but to receive the resolutions on behalf of the Coalition Government and close the Conference. “The State Conference,” he said, “comes to an end. The Coalition Government had expected from it a guarantee of general support in the task of saving the country from the danger threatening it. If the Conference has not given all that the Government could have wished, it has nevertheless shown that the Russian people are democratic and devoted to the freedom attained in the March Revolution. The danger before the

country is extreme, but the Government believes that it can rely upon the patriotism of all Russians who love their country." Then turning to the delegates of the Left he said, "Let him be accursed who speaks at this time of peace." Whereat came murmurs and looks of consternation from the members of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet. And then followed words, which seemed to indicate that Kerensky was thinking of himself as sitting upon the white horse of a dictator, the rôle of which he had so dramatically renounced in Lenin's presence at the first Soviet Congress in June. "To all those who will help me in this great task of saving Russia I shall be merciful. But to those who fail to do their duty and who try to usurp power, I shall be merciless." And with these words the Moscow State Conference came to an end.

I left the theatre and crossed the big square. At a street corner a row of women were standing to get their meagre rations of bread. Their pale faces and anxious eyes betrayed the fear that some calamity was approaching. I walked up to the Kremlin and entered the noble gateway. I passed the spot where the Tsars of the distant centuries lay buried—Tsars who had witnessed alternating periods of rest and turbulence. Russia was now on the threshold of a new era. "Are the turbulent times of my reign coming again?" I seemed to hear the ghost of Boris Godunoff saying. By the clock tower of Ivan the Terrible I stopped. Some well-dressed citizens were discussing with workmen and soldiers, and a number of students were looking on. "Why don't you go to work? Russia is falling to ruins, and her people are idling," said one of the well-dressed. "How can I till the land when I have only one horse, and he is lame?" said a sturdy peasant soldier. "All our horses have been taken for the war, and now I and my father are in debt." "In any case you can go and fight for Russia," came the reply. "Why should we fight for Russia when she is not ours?" said the soldier. And with that the conversation ended. That question had to be answered by the Second Coalition Government. The Moscow Conference had met to try to find an answer to that question, and no answer had been forthcoming.

Ten days later I was standing on the quay by the banks of the Volga at Nijni Novgorod. A newspaper boy ran wildly by selling extra sheets which told of Korniloff's ultimatum to the Second Coalition Government, and of the march of the Tartar and Cossack divisions on Petrograd. I went at once to the local Soviet and found everything astir. Never was the power of the Soviet, even though it was in the hands of indecisive

Mensheviks, greater than it was on this day. Faced with this peril, "Revolutionary Democracy" at last had summoned courage to act. Control was assumed over every office of the local government of Novgorod, telegrams were censored, proclamations issued and special emissaries sent to the remote villages of this great province. Bolshevik sailors of the Volga fleet joined hands with Menshevik railwaymen and Socialist Revolutionary peasants to present a united front to reaction. For one moment I saw the front of the Russian Revolution united against all enemies. If a counter-revolutionary general in Nijni Novgorod had dared on this day to come out for Korniloff, he would soon have found himself in gaol, or perhaps against a firing squad. The danger which had been brewing since the collapse of the premature Bolshevik revolt in July and the formation of the Second Coalition Government had come to a head. The Cavaliers of St. George round Korniloff and the money-bags from England had done their work, and they were powerless before "Revolutionary Democracy" and Demos, united at last. But for how long?

CHAPTER VI

THE EARLY STAGES OF THE AGRARIAN REVOLUTION

I PROPOSE in this chapter to make a digression, in order to treat in some detail the Russian agrarian problem. The necessity for this is apparent, when one remembers that the vast majority of the population of Russia are peasants. Was it possible for a handful of workers in the industrial centres to bring about great social changes without at least the tacit consent of the rural population? Closer study of the agrarian problem in Russia will show us that the rural population was not only not hostile to the revolutionary movement, but was actually one of the chief forces behind it. But in order to understand the nature of the forces working in the Russian village, it is necessary to look back a certain distance in Russian history.

Up to the end of the eighteenth century the dominating element in politics and society on the continent of Europe was the landowning and aristocratic class. The basis of their social and political power was the land monopoly, and the basis of that monopoly was the bodily ownership of the rural population. Throughout a large part of Europe the peasant was either bound for life to his masters' land, or else had to bear fiscal burdens and feudal dues, which reduced him to economic serfdom. But the end of the eighteenth century marked the beginning of great changes in Western and Central Europe. Big agrarian movements led to the liberation of the peasant serfs. The laws of the Convention in the French Revolution abolished for all time the feudal dues of the peasant to his lord. This was followed by the break-down of serfdom in Germany.

These great developments, however, had but small influence on Eastern Europe and least of all upon Russia. Owing to its remoteness from the West and its contact with Asia, Russia remained in the state in which Western Europe was before the French Revolution. Yet the social system which stood behind the Russian autocracy was not of ancient date. It is impossible

to fix quite accurately the time when serfdom became a part of Russian life, but it is certain that during the fourteenth and fifteenth and a great part of the sixteenth century the Russian peasant was legally at any rate a free agent, renting his land from the Tsar or from his official servitors (*pomeshchiki*), or from the boyars (hereditary nobles). For the use of the land he was bound to pay cess-tax to the Tsar and rent to his overlord in the form of money, corn, or so many days' labour in the week. Beyond this payment his liabilities did not go at this period. But with the conquest of the territories occupied since the Middle Ages by the Tartar nomads, the black earth lands of South Russia came into possession of the ruling class of Muscovy. The prospects of large grain exports to Western Europe immensely increased the value of the Russian peasants' labour. In order to secure that the claims of the Tsar, the *pomeshchiki* and the boyars upon the labour of the peasant should be satisfied, restrictions were imposed upon the latter's right of removal. Rents were increased and made payable only in labour. Their non-fulfilment meant legal attachment to the landlord. Thus the chains of serfdom were bound ever tighter round the peasant.

The Russian peasant, however, did not surrender his liberty without a struggle. The most celebrated rebel of this period, Stenka Razin, was nothing but a peasant chief, accustomed to roam the country-side and to live, as most of the peasants at that time did, a semi-nomadic life, cultivating a plot of land first in one province of the Muscovite Empire then in another. In his struggle against authority he gathered round him all those peasants whose spirit rebelled against the Tsar's attempts to tie their bodies to the landlords and to enforce payment of oppressive rents and taxes. How popular was this struggle in the public mind of those times can be seen by the almost God-like reverence with which the name of Stenka Razin is spoken of to this day by the peasants in the steppe district of the Lower Volga, where he lived and roamed. A great part of the Russian folk-lore and popular songs tell of the deeds of this first of the Russian revolutionaries.

But the early peasant rebellions fizzled out, as all sporadic movements of a rural population are bound to do, unless backed by some central organizing power. The complete absence during the eighteenth and the first part of the nineteenth centuries of an urban wage-earning class, which was able to attack the State apparatus of the autocracy at its centre, condemned these volcanic outbursts of the peasants to failure. Thus, while Western Europe was developing its industrial and capitalist system, and

was converting the peasant serfs into landless wage-slaves in the name of "progress," Russia was still governed by an autocrat, supported by a serf-owning agrarian caste.

Nevertheless, the industrial revolution in Western Europe was not altogether without influence upon Russia. After the thirties of the nineteenth century the first signs were to be seen of an industrial system. Exports of timber and flax from the northern provinces to Western Europe began soon to assume important dimensions. European Russia became divided into two economic zones—the southern, purely agricultural black earth, and the northern, industrial, forest zone. Agricultural produce from the south began to be exchanged for the domestic and other industries of the north. But the early stage of industrialism in North Russia, while it absorbed the surplus population from these districts and helped to loosen the chains of serfdom from the peasant, had a precisely opposite effect in South Russia, where it bound the peasant firmer to the soil. During the serf period at the middle of the nineteenth century the majority of the population of the northern provinces were already wage-earners and free rent-payers, whereas in the black earth zone of the south and south-east the peasants were in ever greater numbers being bound to the soil. For the growing market for the agricultural products of the black earth zone increased the value of those peasants' labour. Hence, while the landlords of the north had little inducement to prevent the peasants engaging in industry, the agrarian aristocracy of the south, which controlled the State, were interested in an increasing degree in binding the peasant to the soil. The harshest and most cruel laws were made to hold down the serfs. The reply was an ever increasing agrarian movement among the peasants. During the thirties of last century the average number of agrarian risings per annum in Russia was eleven, during the forties twenty-two, during the fifties thirty-four. From 1816 to 1837 nine landlords were murdered in European Russia; from 1837 to 1853 one hundred and fifty were murdered. Other classes besides the peasants soon began to be restive and to feel the influence of western industrialism. Small landowners, who had become impoverished and possessed serfs but no land, and merchants, who wanted to see irksome social restrictions removed, joined in the demand for the abolition of serfdom. Owners of the rising factories clamoured for equal rights with the landlords in recruiting from the labour market. Free trade in the human body! Away with monopoly of the peasant by the aristocracy! We demand our share of the plunder! These

were the ideas which animated the rising Russian bourgeoisie. Thus the ground was prepared for the Emancipation Ukase of February 19, 1861.

But the Ukase of Alexander II, emancipating the peasants from serfdom, did not usher in an era of liberty for the rural populations of Russia. Characteristic of the spirit in which it was drawn up was the remark of Alexander II to the Council of the Nobility in that year. "It is better," he said, "to abolish serfdom from above than to have it abolished from below." The Ukase, in fact, was nothing but a manœuvre of the aristocracy, with the Emperor at its head, to side-track the revolutionary movement among the peasants by satisfying the demands of the growing middle classes for a free labour market and for unrestricted competition. But the condition of the Russian peasantry not only did not improve after emancipation, it grew steadily worse and more hopeless. From bodily slaves they were now converted into wage-slaves of the most abject kind. The application of capital to the agricultural industry gave an excuse for the landowners to enclose large areas, formerly the common lands of the serfs. During the discussions on the Government commissions for preparing the emancipation law the question was never raised, how much land the peasants should receive as allotments from the landlords' estates. The discussions always turned on the question of how much land, which had hitherto been in the occupation of the serf communes as grazing and forest land, should now be taken away from them. The landlords wanted to take one half away, but finally agreed to take one-fifth. For their legal freedom the peasants had to pay large sums. Between 1861 and 1894 the amount paid by the peasants in purchase money for their "freedom" came to 895,879,473 roubles.* Being unable to pay in gold, the peasants had to give up yearly a portion of their produce or so many days' labour a week on the landlords' demesne. They reverted in fact to the condition they were in during the Middle Ages, when, though legally free, they were economically dependent on the Muscovite *pomeshchik*.

From the time of the emancipation of the peasants from legal serfdom in 1861 up to the Revolution, the condition of the peasants in most districts of European Russia became worse and worse. As their material conditions lowered, the standard of agriculture lowered also. This was observed most of all in the areas where there had been the largest number of

* This may not seem a large sum in these days, but having regard to the fact that then the rouble had a gold backing, it is obviously a colossal figure,

serfs, that is, in the central and southern black earth zone. Thus between 1865 and 1891 in the northern forest zone, where the peasants were beginning to supplement their means of livelihood by domestic and factory industry, the decrease in the area of sown land amounted to 36 per cent. In the black earth zone of the south, however, the decrease for the same period amounted to 44 per cent. Throughout the whole of European Russia during this period the yield of cereals per dessatine decreased according to Masloff¹ 12 per cent. The disastrous condition of the peasantry was made still worse by the fact that the population of the rural districts was actually on the increase all this time. Thus in the northern zones the number of dessatines² per thousand of the population fell 9·7 per cent. between 1887 and 1897. In the southern black earth zone the number of dessatines per thousand of the population fell in the same period by 14·2 per cent. In sixty provinces of Russia there was a surplus agricultural population of twelve millions, which could not, owing to the slow development of industry in the north, find employment outside the villages. The congestion in the black earth zone became greater and greater. The population increased and found themselves hemmed in by the land of the great landlords and bound down to communal allotments which had been provided at a miserably low scale for much smaller communities. So terrible were the conditions that it was a common saying in the villages, "May God grant an increase of our cattle and many child deaths!" The great imposts laid upon the peasants in return for their legal "freedom" necessitated the sale of a large part of the produce, which ought to have gone to feed their families. Often, when the peasants of certain districts were dying of starvation, three or four hundred million pouds of cereals³ were exported in one year from Russia. It is very doubtful if Russia, having regard to her condition during the years before the war, ought to have been an exporter of cereals at all. In any case it is certain that the bulk of the exports were really due to forced sales, and these in turn to the exploitation of the peasantry by the agrarian aristocracy. Such was the state of large parts of the central and southern provinces of Russia that there were villages where it was commonly reported that a well-to-do peasant could be discovered by noting the size of the bugs on the walls of his rooms!

One of the most important results of these conditions was to be observed in the general levelling process among the peasants

¹ *The Agrarian Question in Russia.*

² One dessatine is 2½ acres.

³ One poud is 36½ lb.

of the black earth zone. The pressure of poverty upon the rural communities made them jealously guard against any acquisition by their members of economic advantages at the expense of the others. The allotments, bought on emancipation, were thus strictly divided into equal amounts. The strips of land which each family received were often not more than a few yards wide and stretched for a couple of miles in length, in order that all families should have the same quality of land. The application of capital to the land for improvement became an impossibility under these conditions. Only a quite superficial cultivation could be carried on. The peasants were driven into the abyss of poverty by their overlord and drove each other still deeper in their efforts to save themselves. Their communes, instead of becoming instruments for co-operative cultivation, were used to bring every member down to the condition of its poorest. They levelled down, not up. They were bulwarks against the encroachments of the capitalist system, but in so far as they prevented the community from passing through capitalism to a higher form of society, they were nothing else but drags upon the normal development of the rural population. It is often thought that the village commune originated in a peculiarity of the Slav nature. It is a fact, however, that on the Lower Volga the German colonists, planted there by Catherine II, have in many instances adopted communal systems of land tenure under pressure of increasing population and insufficient land.

Thus the conditions which prevailed among the rural population of Central and Southern Russia were such as to explain the widespread land hunger. For at the beginning of the twentieth century only 36.9 per cent. of all the occupied agricultural land of Russia belonged legally to the peasant communes, whose members comprised nearly 80 per cent. of the whole population of Russia. Of the rest 26.8 per cent. were owned by private landowners, and 36.3 per cent. by the Tsar, the Church, the Imperial family and the Cabinet Ministers. It is true that the peasants worked on more than their own 36.9 per cent. of the cultivated land. Indeed, fully half the remaining 63 per cent. was actually worked by them. But from these rented lands the greater part of the produce was handed over to the private landlords after allowing a miserable pittance for the worker's family. Even the peasants' own communal land was burdened with debt, which they had incurred in buying their "freedom." It was indeed the inadequacy and indebtedness of the communal lands which forced the peasants to seek employment on the

private estates. The rent which they paid for working the latifundia (i.e. the unimproved lands beyond the well-cultivated farms) was of two sorts—rent in kind or money and rent in labour. In the northern forest zone, where agriculture faced the competition of industries, the landlord generally let his latifundium for a rent in money or kind. But in the southern and central black earth zone, where no competition was feared and the labour market was flooded, the peasants were generally allowed to work the latifundia and draw what they could from them only on condition that they gave so many days' labour for nothing on the demesne farms of the landlords. The competition of the land-hungry members of the communes, one with another, enabled the landlords to ask almost any conditions for renting their latifundia. Thus in the central and southern black earth zone, where the land-hunger was greatest and the land values highest, the rents, reckoned in the number of unremunerated days' labour, were the highest in the land.

When it was no longer possible for the surplus population of the centre and south to obtain even the smallest allotment under a commune, or to squeeze even a starvation living out of the landlords' latifundia, their alternative was emigration. Consequently there was from the last decades of the nineteenth century a constant stream of landless peasants from the overpopulated north, centre and south to the less thickly populated east and south-east.* These emigrations took southerly, easterly and south-easterly directions. From the Ukraine and the south-west black earth zone the surplus population of the overcrowded communes went southwards to the Crimea and the Cossack lands of the North Caucasus. From the central black earth zone they went south-eastwards to the Volga provinces. From the northern forest zone the surplus population, not absorbed by industry, went south-east and eastwards, mainly to the Urals and Siberia. According to Masloff² it was possible during recent years to observe a general tendency to move from regions where rent was paid in labour to regions where it was paid in cash or kind. In the south-eastern and Volga provinces and on the Cossack lands agriculture had already by the end of the nineteenth century begun to assume capitalistic forms, and rent and wages were paid in money. Early immigrants to these districts had established themselves as small capitalists and had built farms. Enterprising merchants from centres along the eastern trading routes had acquired allotments

* See map on "Agrarian conditions in Russia," at end of book.

² *Agrarian Question in Russia*.

from the communes and applied their savings to agriculture. The areas of cultivable land were so great here and the population so sparse that the landlords and the interests round the Court were able to secure for themselves large reserves and still leave wide tracts for the peasants. The latter were at first not pressed for land, and hence the commune was less strict in enforcing equal division of the land fund. Communal institutions, in fact, in these parts were mainly used for the purpose of preventing outside immigrants from coming in and claiming allotments. In some parts this particularism of the natives assumed semi-national forms, especially in the case of the Cossacks and the Volga Tartars. The land-hungry Russian peasant immigrant from the central provinces thus found great difficulty in getting registered in the communes of the eastern and south-eastern black earth zone. The majority were compelled to work as labourers for the well-to-do peasants and Cossack farmers. Signs of class differentiation in the villages of these regions began to appear. Within the commune there was to be found a village bourgeoisie and a village proletariat. Both had nominally an equal right to obtain land allotments, but in practice the poor peasant had to relet his allotment to the peasant who had horses and live-stock, and to work for the latter in return. Thus in these districts the class struggle was two-sided. The whole peasant community was in antagonism to the landlords, whose estates they coveted, but at the same time they were divided amongst themselves into rich native and poor immigrant classes. Nevertheless, the comparatively large areas of unreclaimed land made it unnecessary for the peasants to start the levelling process, which had such disastrous effects in the central and southern black earth zones. There was still a comparative prosperity in these regions, especially among the upper layers of the village communities.

This prosperity, however, could not last, for it was dependent upon a large area of unreclaimed land and a thin population. Shortly before the war the pressure of the incoming peasants from the central provinces began to create serious problems. The average land allotments for the members of the communes in the governments of Samara, Saratoff and Simbirsk decreased during the first ten years of the twentieth century. Although they were much larger than the average allotments of the central provinces, everything pointed to the gradual creation of conditions of overcrowding and levelling.

The agrarian unrest in Russia, therefore, before the Revolution could be attributed to the following causes: (1) The over-

crowding of the rural population on areas insufficient to support elementary needs; (2) the existence of large private estates, which held the surplus population to ransom; (3) the overburdening of the whole rural population with debts which could not be liquidated. The results were (a) a highly injurious form of commune was encouraged, which levelled the population down to the condition of the poorest, and (b) improvement of agriculture by the application of capital, either in a private or a public form, was prevented.

In order to realize how impossible it was for a political change to take place in Russia without reforming out of existence the whole agrarian system of the country, one has only to look at the form of the State administration as it existed in the provinces under Tsarism. The whole apparatus of the State was built up on the monopoly rights of the agrarian aristocracy. All the best posts in the Government service were reserved for them. The upper *tchins* or grades in the public services, as established by Peter the Great, were their monopoly. No one could become a "Privy Councillor" of State without belonging to one of the noble families which possessed land, or without having friends at Court. The higher commissions in the army were reserved for these families. It was rare for a general's rank to be conferred on the basis of merit alone. The Corps of Pages in Petrograd was like a very exclusive Eton, to which only the sons of these families had access. But it was essential to pass through it in order to reach the highest Government posts. In the provinces the Dvoryanskoye Sobran'ye (Council of the Nobility) gathered round it the landed gentry of the district, stood by the local representatives of the Petersburg bureaucracy, influenced them in all matters of administration, and gave the tone to the whole country-side. Pressure from them would remove the liberal head of the local Chamber of Commerce, or would impose arbitrary punishment upon a peasant commune which had allowed its members' flocks to graze beyond the limits fixed by the *sobran'ye*. In each rural district there was a *zemsky nachalnik* (rural official), generally a nominee of the *sobran'ye*, approved by the local governor on behalf of the Petersburg bureaucracy. This official's duty was to watch the peasantry, to spy on and report all revolutionary movements in the provinces, and to co-operate with the local gendarmerie in stamping out the latent spirit of Stenka Razin in the village. When a stranger entered a Russian village in the days of Tsarism, an uncanny feeling generally came over him, unless he happened to be accompanied by an official or by a member of the nobility.

The inhabitants would look upon him with suspicion and fear. No peasant would give hospitality to him without asking for a passport, and without reporting his name and address next morning to the *zemsky nachalnik*, who would promptly send a rural guard to bring him to the "presence" and to question him minutely on his reasons for being in the village. The espionage system was so perfect that it would be impossible for anyone to hide in a fishing hamlet in the north of Siberia without the Minister of the Interior in Petersburg knowing of his whereabouts within twenty-four hours.

Early in the twentieth century it was clear that the agrarian changes that were coming in Russia were likely to assume a revolutionary character. Even the bourgeoisie and capitalist classes began to demand a reform of the land system and to show signs of impatience at the privileged rights of the aristocracy. The latter, however, did not read the signs of the times. They tried instead to hold down the peasants with increasing rigour. As early as 1886 a law had been passed on the demand of the Councils of the Nobility, making it possible for landlords to dismiss their labourers without notice, but refusing the labourer the right to break his contract even on the grounds of ill-treatment. It was also enacted that if the labourer escaped, he could be arrested and brought back, and if he refused to work, he could be imprisoned and flogged. In 1906 a law was passed punishing all agricultural labourers who struck work with six months' imprisonment, and all members of land labour organizations with twelve months'. Nevertheless, in the same year there were 143 agrarian strikes in European Russia. Alarmed at the rising tide, the conference of the middle-class *zemstvos* (rural councils elected with a small property qualification) in Moscow in 1905 demanded that a portion of the Imperial lands should be sold to satisfy the land hunger of the peasants in the most congested provinces. The Cadet Party also in the first Duma demanded an increase in peasant proprietorship and the expropriation of parts of the great estates after the payment of adequate compensation by the peasants. But these suggestions of the Russian bourgeoisie pleased neither the aristocracy nor the peasants. The former knew that the surrender of even a part of their estates meant an end to their political power and their control over the country-side. The peasants, on the other hand, would not look at these proposals, because they knew that the purchase of the landlords' estates, large parts of which had been originally theirs, but had been stolen from them after emancipation, would

mean saddling themselves with a fresh burden, estimated at the time at about four milliard roubles. This, of course, meant that the peasants would sink still deeper into debt and be loaded with taxes even more than before. There was no escape from the only solution. It was necessary to give to the Russian peasant the right to the full products of his labour on the land, unburdened by feudal dues. Only then would the standard of agriculture be raised and famine driven from the villages. As neither the Russian bourgeoisie nor the aristocracy would take the necessary steps, the initiative had to come from the peasants, and the "reform from below," so dreaded by Alexander II on the eve of his Emancipation Ukase, became inevitable.

The agrarian revolution in Russia was not immediately preceded, as the French Revolution was, by a whole series of peasant rebellions. The social issue was complicated by the war, the activities of the West European financiers and their military missions. The war, while raising the price of produce for those few peasants who were fortunate enough to have a surplus, imposed on the rest of the population of Russia the burden of a fifteen-million army, and caused untold losses in killed and maimed men and in requisitioned goods. Unconsciously the peasants felt that the ending of the war was the first necessity for them, if they were to improve their economic status in respect of the land. In the immediate pre-revolutionary period, therefore, there were no agrarian risings, but mass desertions from the army to the villages, the young soldiers bringing with them their rifles. This was followed by local movements, which involved the seizing of landlords' demesnes and refusals to pay rent for the latifundia. Nowhere did the movement assume an organized form. The overthrow of the Tsar's Government was not the work of these village deserters, but of urban workers of the northern provinces. Nevertheless, in the early days of March 1917 the peasants, profiting by the removal of the central authority, arrested the *zemsky nachalnik* and set up their own local communes as political Soviets in the country-side. A month or six weeks later, when the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets fell under the influence of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, the communes in the villages began to be superseded in all political functions by commissioners of the Coalition Government. A little later elections were held under the auspices of these Commissioners for the local *zemstvos* or rural councils. But the peasants seemed to place little confidence in these *zemstvos*, which were elected in large, artificial constituencies. The peasants seemed instinctively to feel that their

interests were better served by the small communal councils of each village. The peasants' Soviets, therefore, became the local industrial councils for political and economic purposes, and watched over the doings of the larger *zemstvos*, which by their greater size and unwieldiness fell more easily into the hands of the landlords and their nominees.

At this stage of the agrarian revolution the tendency to class differentiation within the villages was everywhere overborne by the tendency to unite against the agrarian aristocracy and to secure for the community the heritage of their estates. But this union of the village in one economic and political association did not last. As soon as the problem of disposing of the landlords' estates was raised, latent class animosities within the village communities began to arise. The form which these conflicts assumed varied in accordance with the locality and circumstances. In the forest zone of the north and the densely populated black earth zone of the south and centre, the half-proletarian and landless elements of the peasantry began to break away from the rest of the community and form *artels* or little workers' unions on their own. In those parts of the north where landlords' estates were small and of inferior quality the half-proletarian elements began to think of emigration to the rich provinces of the south-east and the Volga, where there were large landlords' estates to be divided, and where there was also some surplus land for settlers. On the other hand, among the communes of the last-named districts signs of internal disunion began to appear, the rich kulak elements tending to combine and use the commune for preventing outside immigrants from getting a footing.

This tendency to an anarchical and unorganized settlement of the agrarian question increased throughout the summer of 1917. The Bolsheviks were at this time without any influence in the villages; indeed, they were almost unknown outside the towns. The only political party which at first had some influence over the peasantry was that of the Socialist Revolutionaries, the leader of which was Victor Tchernoff. Seeing the danger of an agrarian settlement, which did not take the interests of the whole community into consideration, Tchernoff, who was Minister of Agriculture in the First Coalition Government, appointed Land Committees for each area. These committees were to take the landlords' estates under their control and work them pending the settlement by the National Assembly. It was hoped in this way to bring the peasants into direct contact with the officials of the Government, to interest the former in

a national settlement of the agrarian problem, and to prevent the break-up of valuable demesne farms.

Tchernoff's plan, however, was doomed to failure. No sooner had he given the Land Committees these powers than a general campaign was started against him by the middle-class parties, principally by the Cadets. The latter stood for the "inalienable rights of private property," attacked most bitterly Tchernoff's refusal to allow the landlords to sell their estates, and stuck to their old plan of peasant proprietorship, created by land purchase with State aid. Owing to their pressure on the Coalition Government, Tchernoff was dismissed, and the Cadets secured as Minister of Agriculture a "moderate man," who was instructed to do nothing in respect of the agrarian problem until the meeting of the National Assembly. The Cadets at this period of the Revolution were seeing to it that the National Assembly should not meet till "after the war." The All-Russian Soviet Executive, controlled by Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, allowed the Cadets to have their way, and the latter then got bolder and started an open campaign against the Land Committees. Local landlords with the aid of Cossack units and officers' corps started arresting the members of the Land Committees and subjecting them to all sorts of persecution. The effect of this was only to encourage the anarchical tendencies among the peasants, who saw in the attempt of the Cadets to break up the Land Committees a proof that the Coalition Government was under the influence of the middle classes and the landlords. The latter were suspected of having relations with Anglo-French finance and of seeking to mortgage their lands to foreign banks, in order to defeat the peasants. The Tchernoff Socialist Revolutionaries, however, could not summon up courage to adopt drastic and heroic methods in defence of the peasants. They contented themselves with counselling the postponement of a decision on the agrarian question until the meeting of the National Assembly. This, of course, did not satisfy the peasants, who saw in the policy of the Cadets an attempt to defeat the whole Revolution.

The disillusionment of the peasants with Tchernoff and his party began to manifest itself by the autumn of 1917 in the anarchical seizure of estates. In the eastern, south-eastern and parts of the central provinces the peasant communes began in August 1917 to take the landlords' latifundia and so annex them to their own allotments. In many cases the latifundia were already in the occupation of the members of the communes, and in those cases all that happened was that the landlords no

longer received their 30 to 40 per cent. of the produce, raised by the peasants. In some districts this liquidation of the estates went through without any disorders. For instance, in the Samara province, where the Socialist Revolutionaries still retained considerable influence over the well-to-do sections of the peasants, the landlords' latifundia and demesnes passed into the hands of the Land Committees without compensation, for temporary use, until the meeting of the National Assembly. This decision was arrived at by a provincial conference of the Socialist Revolutionary Party at Samara in July 1917. By August not a single private estate existed in the Samara province, and the communes came into full possession of the latifundia. Thus a bloodless agrarian revolution was an accomplished fact in that province before October 1917. On the other hand, in the provinces of Pensa and Tamboff the peasant communes accomplished their objects in a less orderly manner. During September and October 1917 extensive agrarian pogroms destroyed much valuable property on these and in other of the central provinces. These pogroms were, of course, the retaliation of the communes against the landlords and the Cadets for wrecking the Tchernoff land conciliation scheme, and were due to the general disillusionment and to the feeling that after all the March Revolution was not going to solve the burning land question in the interests of the land-hungry masses. The worst of these pogroms took place at Kozloff at the end of September, and resulted in the burning of several mansions and the killing and wounding of a number of persons. The whole movement was spontaneous and had nothing to do with any political party, least of all with the Bolsheviks, who were still regarded with suspicion by large masses of the peasantry in consequence of the terrific campaign which had been carried on against them by the bourgeois press during the summer.

In the northern forest zone of European Russia the communes were by the winter of 1917 largely coming into the hands of the middle and poor peasant elements, who were engaged mostly in domestic industries, and who began to occupy the landlords' demesnes, in spite of the protests of the local commissioners of the Coalition Government, and to dispossess the small kulaks and peasant proprietors, whom they forced to return to a footing of equality with the rest of the community. Meanwhile many of the poorest people of those provinces, where there was small prospect of increased allotments, began to wander eastwards in emigration *artels* or unions, to regions where there were considerable areas of landlords' lands awaiting division.

These migratory movements alarmed not only the peasants of the eastern and south-eastern provinces, but to an even greater degree the Cossacks and other communities, who possessed large land reserves on the borders of Asia. Beyond a zone¹ which runs from the north shores of the Black Sea to Eastern Siberia across the lower reaches of the Volga, lies a narrow strip of land belonging to the Cossacks. It includes part of the basin of the Don and the steppes of the North Caucasus. In the centre it narrows down by Astrakhan at the mouth of the Volga, widens out again to the south of the Ural range in the steppes of the Orenburg Cossacks, and continues with various breaks across the south end of the black earth belt of Western and Central Siberia to the Amur region. The whole of this long narrow area represented at one time the frontier of the Muscovite Tsar's dominions, and was colonized partly by political exiles and partly by adventurous spirits, like Stenka Razin, who refused to submit to feudal authority. In order to prevent the unruly elements of these territories from making trouble nearer home, the Tsars declared this land free of taxation, on condition that the inhabitants kept the frontiers safe from invasion of the nomad Tartars. During the eighteenth century the Tsars tried to impose a stricter military discipline upon the Cossacks. Rebellions against this new policy broke out, the most famous of which was led by Pugacheff. Subsequently, however, the Cossacks submitted, and, in exchange for the military service of every able-bodied man from nineteen to forty-five, received their lands free of taxation. The areas which they received in this way were considerable, and, moreover, contained some of the finest black earth in Russia. The average holdings of a Cossack family are to this day considerably larger than those of the Russian peasant's family.¹ Even in the most favourable south-eastern and Volga provinces the average allotment of a peasant's family under the commune in 1913 was three dessatines. In the territories of the Don and Kuban Cossacks in the same year the average allotment per Cossack family under the *stanitza*, or Cossack commune, was fifteen dessatines. Among the Orenburg Cossacks it was twenty dessatines, among the Siberian Cossacks twenty dessatines, and among the Amur Cossacks thirty-five dessatines.

The Cossack community has thus become specially favoured in regard to its agrarian position, and the descendants of those who fled from the serfdom of the Muscovite Tsars have in more modern times become a privileged caste. The Tsar's policy during the last half of the nineteenth century was to utilize

¹ See map.

them against the revolutionary movements of the peasants in the central provinces. By the commencement of the twentieth century, however, the Cossack leaders began to fight shy of being used in the interests of the agrarian aristocracy round the Tsar's Court, and showed a tendency to refuse to preserve order outside their own territories. This, indeed, was the attitude of the Cossack leaders at the outbreak of the March Revolution and in the following months. In June 1917 the Cossack military chiefs assembled at Petrograd and created the first "Council of the Cossacks of All Russia." The President of this Council was General Kaledin, the Ataman of the Don Cossacks, who in this capacity continued the policy of confining the activities of the Cossacks to the preservation of their own territories. This policy found considerable support from the rank and file of the Cossacks, who were anxious to save the Cossack lands from revolutionary socialization schemes and from the poor peasant immigrants coming from the congested districts of the centre. Attempts were made by the Moscow and Petrograd counter-revolutionaries round Korniloff to use the Cossacks for purposes outside their territories in August 1917 and later, but they broke down owing to the opposition of the Cossack rank and file. Moreover, the Revolution was not without its influence upon the Cossacks. For instance, in the Don country many members of the *stanitzas* had gone to work in the coal mines, thus becoming half-proletarians and assimilating the wage-earners' psychology. The tendency grew among this element to rid themselves of the military burdens imposed upon them by the Cossack officer caste, which had in the last decade acquired a dominating position in the Cossack territories and had obtained considerable private property in land. Thus several of the local Cossack *krugs*, or Councils, on the Don in the autumn of 1917 demanded the resignation of General Kaledin, unless important changes in the terms and discipline of military service were introduced. Nevertheless, the influence which the officer caste retained at this time and for some time after over the Cossack rank and file arose from their readiness to preserve all Cossack territories from interference, either by counter-revolutionaries in Petrograd, or by revolutionary land socializers among the poor peasant immigrants.

In a somewhat similar position to the Cossacks were the sedentary Tartars of the lower Volga and the South Urals. Prominent among these were the Bashkirs, who possessed large tracts of hereditary holdings in the provinces of Orenburg and Ufa. Their rural Soviets or peasant communes, like those of

the Cossacks, tended to become dominated in the early stages of the agrarian revolution by the more well-to-do elements, who were anxious to preserve the Tartar lands from the poor immigrants from the west. In order to safeguard their lands they put forward claims for the territorial autonomy of "Bashkiristan." The Kazan Tartars also put forward similar claims. Since, however, they lived scattered among Russian peasants on the middle reaches of the Volga, their demands did not go much further than "cultural autonomy" at this stage.

To the east of these Cossack and sedentary Tartar lands came the lands of the nomad Tartars of Central Asia and of the mountain tribes of the North Caucasus.¹ These people are the descendants of the former inhabitants of the black earth zones, now held by the Cossacks. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were gradually pressed to the east by the privileged military communities sent to guard the eastern frontiers of Muscovy. During the nineteenth century this process of expropriation was completed. The Tcherkess, Tchetchens, and Inguish of the North Caucasus were driven from the black earth steppes to the high mountain plateaus by the Kuban and Terek Cossacks. The campaigns of General Kauffmann in Turkestan finally secured the Orenburg and Siberian Cossacks in possession of their black earth zones, but left the Kirghiz Tartars with only the dry steppes bordering the desert. But this was not all. During the latter part of last century the Tsar's Ministers and generals were constantly rewarded for services by receiving large strips of territories, which were formerly the grazing lands of the nomads. During the Great War the Tsar's Government imposed the burden of military service in the rear of the army upon the Moslem population of Central Asia. This burden fell with extraordinary severity upon the dispossessed nomads, who rose in revolt. The crushing of this revolt resulted in a terrible Kirghiz massacre during the autumn of 1916 by the Semiretch Cossacks, in the course of which roughly 50 per cent. of the Kirghiz population was wiped out. The civil war, which in a more or less acute form continued throughout 1917 between the nomads and the Cossacks of Central Asia, was only another aspect of the agrarian class struggle transferred to Asiatic surroundings. If the agrarian revolution in the European provinces removed the landed aristocracy from power, and opened up an era of struggle between rich and poor peasants in the villages, its effects in the Asiatic steppe provinces were different. Here the landed aristocracy was not so firmly estab-

¹ See agrarian map.

lished, and the Revolution from the commencement took the form of conflict, often on national lines, between privileged communities with large land reserves and poor nomad communities, whose ancestral grazing lands had been taken from them. The outward signs of this conflict were to be seen in the civil war, which began in the summer of 1916 (i.e. before the March Revolution in the European provinces and before the fall of Tsarism) between the nomad Kirghiz and the Orenburg, Siberian and Semiretch Cossacks, and between the mountain tribes of the Caucasus and the Cossacks of the Terek and Kuban. In this struggle revolutionary weapons were used in Asiatic surroundings. The *yurt*, or encampment council, of the Kirghiz in the Central Asiatic steppes, and the *aul*, or council of the mountain villages of the North Caucasus, became the Asiatic forms of a peasants' Soviet. They exhibited conscious revolutionary tendencies as early as the autumn of 1917, and after the November Revolution sent resolutions of welcome to the Bolsheviks, who were asked for assistance in regaining the native territories from the Cossacks. These movements sometimes also assumed religious form, but at the bottom there lay the rising class consciousness of oppressed Asiatic nomads, who readily understood the meaning of the watchword of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, "Equal allotments for all."

In the heart of Russian Central Asia, where the inhabitants were mostly cultivators of oases in the midst of the desert, the agrarian revolution of European Russia also found echoes. Here the authority of feudal landlords and of *khans*, who still ruled at Khiva and Bokhara under Tsarist protection, was at first unaffected. But during the summer of 1917 the natives of the oases, assisted by the Russian garrisons, which were all formed from progressive elements, succeeded in imposing restrictions on the political rights of the *khans* and the landlords. In actual fact the source of wealth in the oases was not land, but water, and in the distribution of this the bureaucrats of the Tsar's administration in Turkestan had acquired special interests along with the native *khans* and landlords. The native coolies of the oases were subjected to gross exploitation in the imposition of water dues, and one of the first aims of the small cultivators and coolies, aided by the Russian garrison, was to remove the privileges attaching to the distribution of water. Further than this the movement did not go in the early stages of the agrarian revolution in Russian Central Asia.

Thus the Russian March Revolution was brought about by a combination of forces, which aimed at destroying a privileged

agrarian aristocracy. The land hunger among the peasants of European Russia and the unrest among the nomads of the Asiatic steppe territories were one of the most important assets to the revolutionary movement, led by the urban proletariat of North Russia. In the European provinces the land system maintained an agrarian aristocracy at the expense of a peasantry, whose allotments were insufficient to maintain a decent standard of life. In the Asiatic provinces the nomads were deprived of their grazing ranches by privileged communities. The removal of the agrarian aristocracy from power, the liquidation of their estates, and the equalization of land allotments in the eastern territories, became thus the aims of those social forces which stood behind the agrarian revolution. The Bolsheviks, when they came into power with the direct support of the urban proletariat in November 1917, found the agrarian revolution in the provinces already in an advanced stage. It was their task to control the anarchical tendencies, which had arisen in this mass movement from below, and to direct it into orderly and productive channels.

CHAPTER VII

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE VOLGA PROVINCES

IN order to give the reader a picture of life in rural Russia in the early stages of the agrarian revolution of the summer of 1917, I propose in the next two chapters to describe parts of a journey which I made during the autumn of that year in the central, south-eastern and Volga provinces. On September 4th I left Moscow and reached Yaroslav, an old town on the upper reaches of the Volga. After two days' stay here I set out again with a worker in the Central Co-operative Alliance, who was also a peasant, to visit his village in the north-east part of the Yaroslav province.

We boarded a small Volga steamer, sailed some twenty versts downstream, and stepped off at a little village on the left bank of the great river. On climbing up the bank, a wide expanse of country opened out before us. Far in the distance a little white dot denoted a village church. Away to the south-east a silvery streak threaded its way across the landscape, disappearing behind ridges and forests, then zigzagging across meadows again. This was "Mother Volga," the artery along which courses the life-blood of Russia. A moist wind was blowing, and the trees were turning to autumn gold. The sky was sad and overcast. The spirit of the great Russian plain seemed to be speaking and saying, "Winter is coming; it is time to sleep for plant and bird and beast."

We passed through the village with its gabled wooden houses of one storey. By a gateway sat an old woman sifting linseed.

"Hey, little mother," said my companion, "how goes it with you?"

"As always," came the reply, "muddling along somehow. My old man has gone downstream to get some tubs of fish. My son is still a soldier, somewhere down in the Caucasus; I have not heard from him for eight months. I alone am left to run the allotment. Now you are from the town. Tell me, then, when the war is going to end."

"Oh, God knows," came the reply; "some newspapers talk of a Conference at Stockholm, and others don't want it."

"Don't believe those newspapers," said the old woman; "some say one thing, some another. All say what the *baryn* wants them to, and the *baryns* can't always agree among themselves. Muddle-heads, all! I am glad I cannot read."

"It is going to be bad with the food this winter here, I expect," said my companion.

"And no wonder," said the old woman; "nobody understands how to govern in Russia. Someone in Petrograd orders this, someone else in Moscow stops it. The Soviets in one town say one thing, and in another town something else."

"They say it is not much better abroad," said my companion.

"All the world has gone wrong," said the old woman. "The millstones of God are grinding, my dear; some sort of flour will come out of it."

And with this simple piece of Russian peasant philosophy in our minds we passed on down the village street.

We came to the house of my companion's cousin, a small wooden building at the edge of the village. The barn and stable for the horse and cattle lay next to the living room and under the same roof. The living room was spotlessly clean, with icons and portraits of relations on the wall. The owner was a peasant, who had a small allotment from the commune, but, having no horse, he was compelled to borrow one from a rich peasant, who took a percentage of the produce. He himself did carpentering to supplement his income. He only had food enough from his allotment for four months of the year, because the climate was too cold to grow wheat. For the rest of the year he had to rely on what he could purchase from the corn-growing provinces lower down the Volga. Sometimes he could get work in a leather factory, but that was closing down because of the war and the dearth of raw materials. That very day, he told me, he had been calculating that, if the factory worked for two months longer, he would have enough bread to give his family one quarter of a pound a day till next harvest. For the rest he would have to eat potatoes, trust to catching fish on the Volga.

Close by the house at the edge of the village was the wind-mill. The next morning I went across there and found the owner, who was the small village boss. He had the same-sized allotment as the rest of the members of the village, but had taken over and was working the allotments of five other peasants

1. "The boss."

who were too poor to have the necessary capital. In addition to this he possessed the mill, and the local monopoly of corn. He inveighed, as we sat on the steps of his mill, against the corn monopoly of Kerensky's Government, which he said would ruin the country. Only people like himself, he said, knew how to buy the corn and place it in the towns at the cheapest possible rates. The millstones purred, and the great sails went round. On the face of this village worthy was written contentment and wellbeing. On the following day the co-operator, with whom I had come from Yaroslav, wanted to visit some neighbouring villages. Starting out early, we drove in a *tarantass*^{*} across open land, which was cultivated with rye and potatoes, and through stretches of birch and spruce forest. We reached a village ten versts distant, and put up in the house of the local blacksmith. This man had purchased his allotment from the commune under the Stolypin law, while the Tsar's Government was still in power, and had thus become a small proprietor. He was furious with the local peasant Soviet, which since the Revolution, entirely on its own initiative, had declared the Stolypin law invalid, had taken away his land without compensation, and had returned it to the fund, which was at the disposal of the commune. He described to me how he had joined with the neighbouring landlord, who was also threatened with similar treatment, and had petitioned the Coalition Government for troops to be sent to put an end to this "anarchy." But the troops had not come, and from the chairman of the local peasant Soviet, which was to all intents and purposes the village commune, I learned that no troops would come, because the garrison in Yaroslav was on their side, and the railwaymen at Yaroslav had been "squared" not to let in any troop trains from outside. Besides this there were in the village a lot of young peasant sons, who were deserters. They had brought their arms from the front, and were all vitally interested in putting an end to local village bosses with land purchased under Tsarism. I asked if there were any Bolsheviks in the village, and was told there were none. "Those people make trouble in the towns. We belong to the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and Victor Tchernoff is our man," they said.

In the next village which we came to there were no landlords or village bosses. The area of cultivable land was very small, and most of the peasants were foresters in the service of the State. But there were large meadows, which were communally grazed. The village commune appointed a grazier,

^{*} Russian peasant's cart.

who was paid out of a common fund. Some of the peasants had formed into co-operative *artels*, or little associations, and when there was no work in the forests were accustomed to go down the Volga to fish, and divide the catch among themselves.

Towards evening we reached another village and put up at the house of the secretary of the local consumers' co-operative society. Next morning everyone in the house turned out to thresh corn, and I along with them, until I was voted incapable of handling a flail, and was turned on to sweep up the chaff. If the system of land tenure in North Russia is primitive, the system of husbandry is even more so. The harvest, when gathered in, is threshed with hand-flails, four persons taking perhaps a week to deal with the produce of a two-dessatine holding. The process is slow. A bundle of stooks is beaten with flails. The grain and chaff are then thrown into the air for the wind to winnow. Working along with us was an Austrian prisoner, a Ruthene from Galicia. He spoke Ukrainian, but could understand Great Russian. He lived as one of the family and seemed very contented. I asked him if he was going to return to Austria after the war, and he replied that he was quite satisfied where he was. He appeared to be going to marry a girl in the village, and had been promised an allotment by the commune.

On September 9th I returned to Yaroslav and set out on a journey down the Volga. A passenger steamer passed from Ryabinsk towards evening, and getting on board I went to the forepart of the vessel, where the third-class passengers were gathered. A crowd of peasants, fishermen, soldiers, pedlars and raftsmen were gathered round two gypsies, who were singing to an accordion a song of the steppes:

Once I lived as a Yamschik on the post road all alone,
And two black steeds with fiery eyes were all I called my own.
Hey! Raspashol! little rascals then! Pashol!
Hey! Raspashol! You loved ones of my heart!

"Hey! Raspashol!" roared the crowd of passengers.

"Melons to sell! melons to sell!" cried an itinerant fruit hawker.

"How much do you want?"

"Two roubles apiece."

"Walk round the ship two or three times, asking that price, and you'll be ready to sell them for fifty kopecks."

A whistle sounded from the bridge deck, and a voice roared,

"Clear that gangway!" A general commotion followed, in which ropes, babies, sacks and women were mixed up together. When it had subsided, I heard the plaintive wail of the gypsy rising above the hissing of the waves :

Cossack, do not drive my horse,
For I will not wander more ;
I have no one now to love,
I have reached life's barren shore.

Sssh!! Sssh!! said the waves of the Volga.

Oh! how lovely are your eyes,
Like stars of diamond in the night ;
Love of you robs me of sleep,
How I hate your very sight!

"Raft sighted on the starboard!" came from the fore-castle. "All right," said a voice on the bridge deck. A black object loomed out of the darkness and vanished astern.

"I told Peter Nikolaevitch that the Committee won't allow any seed corn to leave the district this winter," said a voice among a group of peasants, huddled up in a circle chewing bits of sunflower seed. "Committees are making trouble everywhere this year," said someone else. "I tell you there will be no lower prices till the war ends," said a third; "it is so bad that I can't sow my two dessatines this year; there is not sufficient seed corn, and I have only one horse; the other died last month." "There is no God but Allah, and Mahommed is his prophet," came from a dark corner behind me. It was a Tartar, who had spread out his carpet and was turning to the Mecca of his hopes. "There is no hope for us till the landlords and capitalists go," growled someone. "What's the use of a Revolution, if it only means that somebody else sits in the place of Nicolas Romanoff?" "Allah is great, there is no God but Allah," murmured the Tartar, as he bowed his head to the ground. "Old brother Ahmet is comforting himself with his prayers," said a young soldier to his mate; "pity he can't pray for us." "Perhaps he can, but do you think it would do any good, Kelya?" said the second. "If I thought praying would save us from famine this winter, I should be on my knees all day," said the first. "Instead of which you attend meetings of the Soviet," interjected an old peasant; "you and the Tartar are godless fellows, that's what I think of you both."

How long this talking went on I do not remember, for towards eleven o'clock I lay down on a bit of old sacking and

slept. At daybreak I rose, and got a supplementary ticket, which enabled me to go to the first-class saloon. How quiet and respectable it was! So conscious of its superiority over the "rabble" of the lower deck.

"I say there is no hope for Russia till we have a dictator who can discipline these dogs, and stop all this anarchy," said a man in a general's uniform to his neighbour, a well-dressed civilian. Both were sitting at a mahogany table, taking coffee and rolls.

"Oh, yes, that's quite true," said the civilian. "Before the Revolution the peasants on our estate used to work well, but then, of course, you always had to be there with the threat of force to drive them; I suppose it is just the same with the soldiers in the army."

"Yes, yes; they must have someone to rule over them. They flounder about in times like these and don't know how to act. They are a dark and ignorant lot. Only a strong man can deal with them. Kerensky is a well-meaning creature, but weak. Alexeieff and Korniloff are the only people for Russia now, and I think the people would welcome them with open arms. I told that to a secretary of the French Embassy the other day in Petrograd."

"Russia is helpless without foreigners to rule her," said the well-dressed civilian. "Let the English, French and Germans come here and put this mess right, and let us go to Paris and London," he continued with a laugh.

"Look, dear," said a gorgeous lady with coloured eyelashes and rouged lips, coming up to the General, "I promised to show you these trinkets last night, but they were packed up. I bought them in Moscow for six hundred roubles apiece. Before the war they were fifty roubles each."

"Where did you get them, my dear?" said the General.

"In a little shop in the Arbat. Alschwang's is no good now, except for dinner. By the way, I got magnificent caviar there last week."

"Really, my dear," said the General, "I wish I had been with you."

We arrived at Nijni Novgorod, where I spent an exciting day on shore, watching the masses react to the news of the Korniloff rebellion. Returning late to the ship I entered the first-class saloon for supper. Here I found most of the people in very high spirits. The general was following with a map the movements of Korniloff and his "wild division" in the direction of Petrograd, stopping every now and then to say

that he must get off at the next town and hurry to Korniloff's Staff, where there was much better work for him than visiting garrisons in the interior to report for Kerensky—the job he was supposed to be doing at the moment. The well-dressed civilian hoped that, when Korniloff got to Petrograd, he would declare a military dictatorship for a year, and organize an army for an offensive against the Germans next year. There must be a few English and French troops, of course, to stiffen the army, hunt out Bolsheviks in the towns and Tchernoff's Socialist Revolutionaries in the villages, and then everything would be all right again. This view was not shared, however, by a young man, one of Kerensky's Commissioners of Police in Moscow and a Socialist Revolutionary of the right wing, who was on board. He was afraid that Korniloff was out for a complete restoration of Tsarism and a separate peace with Germany.

Next morning I returned to the third-class behind the fore-castle. The gypsies had left, but a Moslem juggler from Central Asia was doing tricks and charming snakes. A baby was screaming, and the same fruit hawker was going about selling melons. A young soldier was in hot controversy with an Orenburg Cossack, who maintained that General Korniloff was not a traitor, that he was not rebelling against Kerensky, but was only going to clear Petrograd of criminals and then return to the front. "How can that be so?" yelled the soldier; "do you mean that Kerensky can't cope with criminals in Petrograd himself? Besides, the Soviet is with him, as soon as a general from the front begins to interfere in politics. Or, do you mean that the Soviet is full of criminals?" But the Cossack remained silent. He would not allow himself to be drawn out of his depth. "If Korniloff thinks he is going to have another offensive on the front as in July, he will be bitterly disappointed," dryly observed one of the soldiers, as he looked up from a great piece of melon. "If gentlemen like Korniloff don't look out, they will all find their way to the gallows," remarked a young fisherman.

The Volga now broadened out into wide sheets of water intersected by long, narrow sandbanks. Tugs, pulling the giant barges laden with corn and oil for the industrial centres in the north, were painfully paddling their way upstream in and out of the shallows. Here and there we would pass a sheet of deep water, where ships and barges were riding at anchor alongside of a wooden quay. Here gangs of workers were to be seen driving piles. They were singing the old Volga song about the "little dubinotchka," the beam of green oak, used to this day for driving in piles on the river side. Each time

they hauled up the pulley for the next fall of the oak beam they would rhythmically sing :

Many songs I have heard in my own native land ;
Both of sorrow and joy they tell,
But one of those songs in my memory rests,
'Tis the song of the workers' *artel*.

Chorus :

Eh! *Dubinochka, patyurniem!*
Eh! my little green one, heave up!
Patyurniem! Patyurniem! Da ukhniem!

The Englishman, wise, by the engine and steam
The failing of strength has prevented,
But our Russian *moujik* has his native resource,
For *dubinochka* he has invented.

Chorus :

Eh! *Dubinochka, patyurniem*, etc.

Every now and then we could reach a large village perched up on the bank. Here crowds of peasants were waiting to board the ship for another spot lower downstream or to sell us food. As soon as the ship pulled up at the quay we would rush out, and then would follow a pandemonium of yelling and shouting. "How much does each egg cost?" "Hurry up with that change, the steamer is going." "That chicken is far too dear." We were already beginning to feel the East, for here and there among the crowd we would see the slit eyes of a Chuvash or Cheremiss, a people of Finnish origin and dialect, who live in villages scattered among the Russians in these parts, and more frequently still we would see the high cheek-bones and skull cap of a Kazan Tartar, haggling over five kopecks just as the steamer was about to cast her hawsers loose; the theory, of course, was that the nearer the moment of departure the higher would be the price. The second whistle meant an advance of 50 per cent., the third of another 50 per cent. The Revolution had done nothing to instil the idea of co-operative trading among these people. Indeed, the scarcity of food made them all the more rapacious.

But if these riparian inhabitants of the Volga tended to become socially parasitical as the result of the Revolution, the same could not be said of those whose lives were spent upon her waters. For, standing that evening on the bow of the ship, watching the sun cast silvery rays upon the river and light up the jungle of osiers, poplar and rushes with gold and orange tints, I got into conversation with a young raftsmen. He was looking out intently across the waters, as if expecting to see some-

thing. Far away to the east, west and south lay the broad open steppe. The very sight of it made one's spirit leap with a sense of freedom, and a desire to wander at will across its boundless expanse. The young man was on the lookout for a train of rafts, which belonged, he said, to him and his comrades. The rafts were somewhere on this reach of the river, moored to the bank, waiting for him. He had gone up to Nijni to fetch some tackle. Two fires were to be the signal of his comrades. He was then to jump off and make for the spot. His comrades were also going to use the time in catching fish and hunting sand-grouse, for, he said, they lived largely on what they caught themselves on these expeditions.

"Have you been long at this sort of life?" I asked.

"After the 1905 Revolution," he replied, "we were looked for by the police, because we had a fishing hut on the banks of the river where the Kazan revolutionaries held their meetings. After that was discovered we took to raft-work, which meant that the police could not get at us so easily, for we never put in at the quays, and they would have to send special boats if they wanted to catch us. Then came the war, and they wanted to call us to the army, but we had a friend in Astrakhan, who gave us the job of bringing timber down stream for the fish barrels. We had to run the gauntlet of the Kazan police each time we made a trip. Then came the Revolution, and now things are easier."

It appeared that he and his comrades made their own rafts and divided the profits of the freights among themselves. They were, in fact, a little workers' *artel*, formed for common work and to escape from the rigours of the Tsarist regime. They were modern Stenka Razins, who found a lonely freedom in plying the waters of the Volga. Just then someone among the third-class passengers behind the forecastle started singing the old Volga song, which with a little poetic licence may perhaps be translated into English as follows:

Down by the little Mother, down by the Volga,
Down by the sand banks seven,
Where the great wide steppes
Rest under the bowl of heaven.

Not a ripple was seen on the Volga,
No, not a wave was seen;
Only one black spot
Upon the watery sheen.

Whence that solitary ship and wherefore
Stands its skipper at the helm,
Silent and grim, waiting, watching?
Stenka Razin, surveying his realm.

Suddenly two fires were seen blazing on the bank on the starboard bow, and a long resonant cry was heard from someone on a dark object under the bank. The young raftsmen leapt up, ran to the stern, jumped into his boat, which was trailing along beside the steamer's rudder, let go the ropes and vanished into the darkness.

At last the steamer heaved alongside the quay of a big city, perched on the top of a long ridge overlooking a wide sweep of the Volga. I had arrived at Samara, the great wheat centre of South-East Russia. I soon became aware of this, too, for on the quayside women in picturesque peasant costumes crowded to sell white bread to the passengers. This was indeed a luxury, which inhabitants of the northern provinces had been without for many a long day.

I intended to devote my stay in the Samara province to the study of the agrarian question, and my first object was to get in touch with the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. I found their bureau installed in the old Tsarist Governor's house, which it shared along with the Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies. The people who were inspiring the Peasants' Soviet were all members of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, of the Centre or Tchernoff group. There were two or three very intelligent women and some young peasant soldiers who were taking an active part in the work of the Soviet. I noticed in talking to them on the agrarian problem that they adopted a somewhat apologetic tone, as if something were happening on the land for which they were not responsible. "They accuse us in Petrograd of being robbers and of destroying the landlords' properties," said one of the Deputies, "but the fact is, we have done everything to restrain the peasants and have, at the last conference of the Socialist Revolutionary Party for the province, drawn up a memorandum of general directions to be followed by the local Land Committees. In this we have laid down that landlords' estates are to be temporarily taken on public account." They then asked me if I would visit the villages and see for myself what was going on there. A young peasant soldier was going for a few days to his home and offered to take me with him. We set out the next day.

The village lay along the railway to Central Asia about thirty versts east of Kinnel Station. Late in the evening we arrived at the village of Grachefka after driving across the open country in a *tarantass*.¹ We drove down the broad, unpaved village street, on both sides of which stood rows of wooden gabled houses.

¹ Russian peasant's cart.

The street was almost empty. An old peasant was returning home from ploughing, and a small boy was trying to direct a huge drove of sheep and cattle back from pasture with the aid of a tiny twig. A feeling of depression lay everywhere. It was true that a tattered red flag, flying from the roof of the wind-mill on the outskirts of the village, was a joyful sign of the great deliverance last March. But on entering the house of my companion's father, an old peasant, I soon felt that the gloom, which had been temporarily lifted by the fall of Tsarism, was settling down again with the prospect of an indefinite continuation of the war. In the living room the walls were still covered with religious pictures, and the little oil lamp burnt before the icon in the corner. But beside all these I saw nailed up on a background of red cloth the appeal of the Petrograd Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies to the proletariat of all the world to lay down their arms—the symbol of the new religion, whose influence was penetrating even to remote villages of the great plain.

We sat down on the wooden benches and waited. A purring *samovar* and a pot of cabbage soup with bits of meat were brought by the womenfolk, and the family gathered round the table and silently ate. Two years ago there had sat at this board the old father and mother, four sons and their wives and a number of grandchildren. Now only one of the sons had survived the war, and he had escaped because he was short-sighted and had been put to work in the rear. Of the daughters not one had a husband alive. The whole work of managing the homestead and cultivating the portion allotted to the family by the commune had fallen on the old man, the surviving son, and the three widows. A boy of twelve, the eldest son of the first son, spent the days looking after the sheep in the distant meadows. The united families thus lived under the same roof and carried on a common domestic economy, the ties which united them having apparently been strengthened by the calamities and losses inflicted on them by the war.

Next day I saw how this little communal unit of the village—the family—was itself part of a larger commune. The *selsky skhod*, now renamed the "village Soviet," was meeting by the common barn on the village green. At this gathering every able-bodied man and woman in every family had a right to be present and take part in the discussions on matters concerning the welfare of the little rural commune. It was Sunday, and about midday, after Mass in the village church, the heads of families began to gather round the common barn. The scene

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was more like a village fair than a public gathering at which business was to be transacted. It seemed a picturesque muddle with a strong Asiatic tinge in it. Bearded patriarchs in fur caps were gathered in one group and were holding forth on the price of corn; a travelling Tartar was squatting on the ground offering Persian carpets for sale; some women in picturesque peasant costume were complaining about the absence of sugar in the village; a group of peasants in sheepskins were discussing the Korniloff rebellion; gypsies were selling furs; soldiers back on leave were relating stories of life on the front. Mangy dogs were walking in and out of the crowd; a ragged beggar pushed his way into a company of village worthies who were discussing the Socialist Revolutionary Party's new directions for the Land Committees, and asked for alms "in the name of the Mother of God." The village priest, with his sonorous voice, began to attract a crowd round him and appealed for subscriptions in support of the parish church school. "Eh, little father," said someone, "you want to show us the way up there; but we have had a revolution, and are content to wait down here for a while yet."

The President of the commune, sitting on a wooden box and chewing nuts, would occasionally bawl out, "Comrades, to order; let us get to the business of the day," and would then relapse to his nuts again. After much difficulty the young peasant soldier, who had brought me from Samara, succeeded in getting some sort of order into this picturesque chaos, and made a report to the gathering on the last sitting of the Soviet of Peasant Deputies in Samara, at which important decisions were taken on the question of the landlords' demesne lands. The Central Soviet had recommended the temporary use of these lands by the Land Committees pending decision by the National Assembly, when it should meet. At this a general outcry was raised. "What guarantee have we that the National Assembly will meet?" said one peasant; "and in the meantime any Korniloff on a white horse may dissolve our Land Committees. We have worked that land for the *baryn* for the last fifteen years, and it is time that we had it for ourselves." Another put forward the claim that, as the community had worked that land for so long and had paid 30 per cent. of the harvest each year to the landlord without the latter having done anything in improvements, the commune was entitled in future to annex this 30 per cent. and put it to the public use. Finally, it was agreed that the regulations of the Soviet of Peasants' Deputies in Samara should be disregarded, and that the land-

lords' demesne and latifundium for that district should be annexed to the commune. But what was to happen to the live and dead stock on the demesne farm? asked someone; it would be ruinous to divide it. But that had not entered into anybody's calculations. The chief thing in the mind of the peasants was to get the land into their own hands, and so to face the authorities with a *fait accompli*. Then it would be possible to keep the land-hungry proletarians of Petrograd and Moscow from coming and claiming a share, and counter-revolutionary generals, if any came in the future, would have a difficult task to return the land to the landlords. In this decision everyone seemed to be united. The well-to-do peasant with an ample waist, spotless blue serge tunic and peaked hat agreed, because he hoped that the lion's share of that land would come to him, as none but he had sufficient horses and capital to work it. The members of the family where I was staying thought the same, for, although they were poor and had not enough land, still they had enough strong hands to manage another couple of dessatines next year. And the poor peasant with only one horse, who sat on a soap box against the barn, also agreed, because he hoped that, if he got a share of the landlords' livestock, he would be able to cultivate his allotment next year, instead of having to let it to the well-to-do peasant with the ample waist, who would pay him next to nothing in rent. All classes in the village were agreed, though for different reasons. The village commune was still a happy family on this Sunday afternoon. The process of splitting up into classes had not yet come, for the classes, rich, poor and middle peasant, although they had already appeared, had a common object, namely, the liquidation of the last relics of feudalism.

On the following day the old peasant with whom I was staying and his son went off to one of their allotments, which was situated about ten versts distant, to plough. I accompanied them. We arrived on the spot soon after dawn and found the bread-winners of three other families already there. To my surprise, my host and his son began to plough along by the side of the others—four teams in all going on the same plot. These four families had clubbed together in a little ploughing *artel*, and all had agreed to plough, reap and harvest their respective allotments in common. Here, therefore, was yet another communal unit, a group of families living under different roofs, and associating to work their land in common. Each family however, retained the products of its allotment for itself. The ploughing went on with several breaks till nightfall. Then the

horses were tethered and turned loose to graze, and we went into a little hut, made out of mud and wattle. A meal was cooked on an open fire, and we lay down to rest on the straw-covered floor and listened to the hooting of the night owls, the chirping of the crickets, and the gentle sigh of the soft autumn wind coming across the steppe.

In the morning the ploughing was finished, and we set off to visit the landlord's latifundium, about which there had been a discussion the day before in the meeting of the commune. I noticed that, as soon as we got on to the land of the local squire, the black earth showed up richer and deeper. On the allotment lands, where we had just been, the black earth was thin and the sand only just below the surface. These allotments had been granted to the peasants of this village after emancipation in 1861, but the produce grown upon them was enough to feed the families of the commune for only five months in the year. The food for the remaining seven months had to be got by working the landlord's latifundium, which was the best land in the locality, for the Tsar's Government had given the peasants on emancipation the worst land. But from his latifundium this landlord used to demand, until the year 1917, 40 per cent. of the produce as rent and a minimum of 100 pounds of threshed corn per family. "You see, my dear," said the old peasant in a confiding way to me, "we have to fight all the time to drag out of this land enough to make up for what we can't get out of the other. And we pay the *baryn* his share as well. But this year it will be different. There are no more rural police, since Nicolas Romanoff went, and Kerensky won't dare to send any soldiers to make us pay our 40 per cent. this year, because the soldiers are all our sons."

The following day I went alone to visit the person who until recently had been the local landlord. The manor house was situated in the middle of a wide expanse of beautiful black earth steppe. Groves of poplar trees surrounded the mansion. The home farm had only twenty acres attached to it now—all that was left of a 3,000 dessatine estate. The rest had been annexed by the commune in spite of the threats of the Provisional Government in Petrograd. As far as this part of Russia was concerned, it was clear that the agrarian revolution had already begun by September 1917.

I walked through the shrubbery up to the wooden, two-storied manor house, plastered with stucco. Grass was growing on the roof, and in the dilapidated greenhouse a cow was finishing off what remained of the ferns. An old servant answered

the bell and took the "English reporter" to the squire, who was in his study packing up to go away the next day. He was an ex-soldier of general's rank, who had been educated in that most aristocratic of institutions in Tsarist Petrograd, the Corps of Pages, had served in the Life Guards, and had been through the Russo-Turkish war with the old Grand Duke Nicolas. What a change he had lived to see in Russia! "I am going to leave and turn my back on this place for good," he said, after he had asked me to be seated, "because I hear that the commune has passed a resolution that all spare rooms in this house are to be turned over for the use of a new school. At any rate, in the Crimea I can find rest, unless this anarchy has broken out there. If no parts of Russia remain safe, I shall have to ask the hospitality of your country." He used not to like Englishmen, he said, because Lord Beaconsfield robbed Russia of the fruits of Plevna and the Shipka Pass, and he, as a young lieutenant, had taken part in those battles. But politics had changed since those days, and he did not seem to have any diffidence about accepting the hospitality of his former national enemies in retiring from his struggle with the much more dangerous class enemy at home. He sighed as he quoted the lines of Pushkin's poem, the "Brother Robbers": "We live without power or law; like flocks of ravens they come and sweep over the land." The ravens in his mind were the Peasants' Soviets, the local village commune, the gathering of which I had witnessed on the previous day. "These people," he said, "are the ruin of Russia. Everything used to be quiet and orderly here, and my peasants were contented. I gave them seed corn, and even bought for them manures, when they were in difficulties. Nobody wanted any change. But agitators from the town have come and stirred the peasants up. I blame the Cadets for having allowed all this talk about 'democracy' to get about. They ought to have stopped this rabble long ago. Now it is too late." Thus spoke this relic of the old Russian agrarian aristocracy, of the type that one reads of in Turgenieff's novels. He was just on the eve of being swept away by elementary forces, seething up from the abysmal depth, where Demos, suppressed for centuries, at last was awakening to the consciousness of his strength. And yet one had a pang at the thought of the complete disappearance of this type, for on the bookshelf opposite me lay a collection of poems written in his youthful days by the occupant of this old manor. They were fruits of that leisure which has given many gems of art, literature and music to Russia and to the world. Was it not in surroundings like these that the

great master of letters, Leo Tolstoy, lived and laboured? But the sands were running out. Peasants were claiming the right to enjoy the whole product of their labour on the land. Till now the occupants of the manors had levied toll upon that product and had enjoyed those leisure hours in which to study and create in literature and art. But the cold wind from Sovietdom was blowing now and was sternly sweeping aside these hot-house plants of nineteenth-century aristocratic culture.

On the following Sunday I visited with the peasant's son the Holy Trinity Monastery, twenty versts away to the south. We drove across the open steppe and then through long stretches of birch and poplar forests, standing silent and mournful as if waiting for the bitter blast of the first winter's storm. Presently we heard the sound of a deep-toned bell and the cupola of a monastery church appeared through an open space in the forest. Now, the abbot of this monastery was supposed to be a very holy man, and, as a disciple of the notorious Ilidor, he had acquired a reputation for working miracles. He had discovered that it was a paying thing to be holy. Land had been given him by local landlords, and he had in fact capitalized his holiness at 100 per cent. I was hoping to have an interview with this important personage, but on my arrival at the monastery I was told that there was no longer an abbot. He had left some days ago, and the monks were now in sole possession of the place. What had happened? It was soon explained. The Revolution had penetrated into the sacred precincts of the monastery; the monks had gone on strike, and had turned out the abbot, who had gone off with as much real estate as he was able to take with him.

I was received by a leader of the monks, who was a sort of President of the Council of Monastic Deputies (Monks' Soviet, as one might call it). He was a brawny young fellow, who would have been more at home, I thought, at the plough than in a monastery. Indeed, earthly cares seemed to interest him more than spiritual, and the yield of potatoes per dessatine more important than the interpretation of the Book of Revelation. Indeed, I don't think he even knew of the existence of the book. He described to me how the "revolution" in the monastery had come about. The monastic lands in part were let out to the neighbouring peasants, who paid the abbot 40 per cent. of the yield, and in part were left to the monks to work to grow food for themselves and the abbot. The produce thus coming into the monastery was distributed by the abbot as he thought fit. He put the monks on rations, and, as the towns

were beginning to get hungry, sold the rest at speculative prices. In order to impress the monks with his disinterestedness in worldly matters, he had made them kiss his hand every day after service as a sign of his holiness. In the last month, however, news of the doings of the Petrograd Soviet, of the Kronstadt sailors, of the transport workers in Tsaritzin on the Volga, and of the peasant communes in the neighbourhood had filtered in, and, under the influence of Marxism, the monks began to realize that they were the "monastic proletariat," and that the abbot, in spite of his holiness, was a "bourgeois." Thus Bolshevism penetrated into the Holy Trinity Monastery.

How was this Council of "Monastic Deputies" developing its little revolution? It appeared that an agreement had been struck with the neighbouring village commune. Once again I found evidence that, as in other parts of rural Russia at this time, the principle was being laid down and sternly enforced, that no one should receive from his commune more land than he was able to work with his own labour or with that of his family. Therefore the monks were turning over to the neighbouring commune all the land that they could not work, and were working the rest on a co-operative basis. Each monk put in so many hours a week on the land, and everyone received an equal share of the produce. The services in the monastery church were kept up, but somewhat reduced in number. I attended a service that evening, and afterwards had a simple meal of bread, fat and potatoes, and a clean bed—an unusual thing at most monasteries in Russia. Next morning I returned to the village.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT THE COSSACKS AND TARTARS THOUGHT OF THE REVOLUTION

I NOW set out to visit the Cossack and nomad Tartar lands on the borders of Central Asia. My first objective, therefore, was Orenburg, which lay a day's journey in the train from the little rural station where I was. The black-earth steppe, dotted with patches of pine forests, now changed into rolling downs and fertile alluvium. Streams were rare, but here and there a river, tributary of the Ural, threaded across the landscape and marked its path by the jungles of golden reed beds, haunts of the pheasant and wild boar. An azure blue sky overhead and an atmosphere of crystal told me that I was approaching the threshold of Asia.

The train arrived at Orenburg, the capital of the Cossacks of that name, and the trading centre in which Russian colonist, nomad and sedentary Tartar congregate. I found myself in half-European, half-Asiatic surroundings—in one street shops with Moscow wares, picture palaces and restaurants patronized by the bourgeoisie; in another carpet bazaars and black-eyed Tartars, leading camel caravans. Somewhat between these two extremes of culture came the Cossacks, groups of whom could be seen driving shaggy ponies down to drink in the river.

The day after my arrival I went to the Provincial Government house, where I found the 'local Soviet of Workmens' Deputies. The President was a Menshevik, who, in company with a number of delegates from the workers of corn mills in Orenburg, received me in the room of the former Tsarist Governor. They had not long before experienced the Korniloff rebellion and had gone through a trying time, surrounded as they were by Cossacks under command of counter-revolutionary officers. I found that the same thing had occurred here on the borders of Asia as in European Russia. The Menshevik President and functionaries of the Soviet, who had been elected at the commencement of the March Revolution, had been working amicably with the local Russian bourgeoisie and Cossack officers. The working-class

colony of Orenburg, however, had been drifting steadily against compromise, and were adopting the watchword, "All power to the Soviets." The news of the Korniloff rebellion cleared the air. The Menshevik officials were in danger of being arrested by the Cossack reactionaries, who had large forces in the barracks outside the town. They were therefore compelled to rely on the workmen, who at once came to their aid, organized a Red guard, took command of the Post and Telegraph Offices, established a censorship, and controlled the railway station and traffic, until the danger was past. Since the Korniloff episode the Soviet had been dominated by a majority of delegates from the corn mills, who were in fact, if not in name, Bolshevik. The old Menshevik functionaries, however, were kept there as dummies, and were not removed because the local workmen were waiting for the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets to declare their policy towards a proletarian dictatorship.

What was the attitude of the Cossacks to these events? In a big building, on which was written "*Upravlenie Orenburgskikh kazachikh Voisk*," I found the whole apparatus of administration of the Orenburg Cossacks. The following day I devoted to the study of the Cossack administration. I sent in my card to the Ataman, who received me. I felt myself at once in a different atmosphere from that of the Orenburg Soviet. At the door stood sentries, who saluted all officers who passed by—a sight never seen among ordinary soldiers of the Russian army since March 1917. The Ataman, a grey-haired old patriarch in a general's uniform, and with Tsarist orders pinned to his chest, received me. I approached the subject of the relations of Cossack officialdom to the Soviets. He tried to avoid it, and began: "We Cossacks are essentially democratic, for we were free when the Russian peasant was a serf. All our institutions are democratic. I, for instance, am elected by the Cossacks of this area. We divide our land equally among the families of each *stanitza* (Cossack village). But Russian peasants from the European provinces are continually trying to migrate into our territories, and now the Socialist Revolutionary Party tells them that they are equal to us and have the right to the same allotments of land. We have nothing against those peasants, who have lived among us for decades. In the *stanitza* we may even admit them on equal terms, if they accept our military obligations. But we insist on the right to preserve our ancestral territories from invasion by immigrants from outside. What our fathers won we shall not give up. Also we object, when mechanics and workmen, who come from the towns of Central Russia to work in the flour

mills here, set up their Councils and try to run this town and spread their Marxian ideas of the class struggle among our Cossacks. We are here to protect the interests of the Cossack troops and cultivators, who are the majority of the population here. We are not directly concerned with the revolutions and counter-revolutions that convulse Central Russia."

A few days after this interview I received an invitation to the Conference of the Delegates of the Orenburg Cossacks, which was just meeting in the town. It was the first that had been held for 150 years, since the time, in fact, when Peter the Great abolished the free institutions of the Cossacks. In the square outside the Staff Headquarters of the Orenburg Cossacks, a squad of troopers was drawn up. The Deputies from the *stanitzas* began to arrive. Officers in blue-striped trousers and adjutants rode up on shaggy Asiatic ponies. The atmosphere inside was a striking contrast to that of the meetings of the Workers' Soviets or of the peasants' communes. There was no feeling of comradeship. A spirit of authority pervaded everything. On the front bench sat the generals, colonels and the Ataman, all of whom seemed as if they had come out on parade. On the back benches the *ryadovoys*, Cossacks of the rank, sat vacantly staring in front of them, as if they had no souls of their own, and were only waiting for the word of command. Behind the Ataman stood a row of sentries with drawn swords, and on each side of him were fixed the standards of the Orenburg Cossacks. More than half the delegates were officers and officials of the Cossack military bureaucracy, who, now that the old Tsarist bureaucracy of Petrograd had gone, were the sole directing force among the Cossacks. The rest of the delegates, Cossack troopers from the ranks and poor cultivators of the soil, seemed to be taking a back seat. How was it that they, who represented the bulk of the population of the *stanitzas*, were in a minority at the Conference? Did they perhaps acquiesce in this domination by the officer caste under stress of military discipline? I was soon to see. The Conference began. The Ataman opened with an address of welcome. The Cossacks, he said, were a free people, who loved democratic institutions. They alone among the Russian people were inspired by patriotism. The Cossacks had realized from the first that the Russian Revolution was a national movement which enabled Russia to raise her economic and military strength. Therefore away with all talk about peace without annexations or indemnities! The Cossacks were fighters and not diplomats. Away with revolutionary Soviets, financed by Jews! They must be abolished, if Russia was to be

saved. Wild applause went up from the generals and officers of the front benches. The troopers, however, at the back of the hall looked stolidly in front of them, as if waiting for the word of command. The question of the election of a new Ataman came next on the order of the day. The old general was to retire. The officers on the front bench put their heads together. The name of Dutoff was proposed as successor. Were any other candidates proposed? asked the Vice-President. Silence reigned in the hall, and the occupants of the back benches remained as impassive as mummies. Dutoff was elected. And thus commenced the career of one who was destined to play a large rôle in the subsequent history of the Russian counter-revolution. He was in future to be the "freely-elected Ataman of the Orenburg Cossacks," the commander of Koltchak's left wing in Siberia, the object of tender care on the part of those in the Allied countries, who poured out the British taxpayer's money and shed British blood in order to support the "true Russian people."

Dutoff, however, commenced his Atamanship without any great flourish of trumpets. The time was not ripe for a *coup d'état* from the Right. The Allies were far off and too heavily involved with the Prussian Imperialists. But news had recently arrived that the Russian garrison in Central Asia had arrested its officers and declared its Soviet the sole authority there. Kerensky had just sent a telegram to the Ataman of the Orenburg Cossacks, asking him to send down immediately a couple of Cossack divisions and bring the mutinous garrison to its senses. The telegram lay on the table as Dutoff, in the uniform of a colonel, stepped into the Ataman's chair. It was read aloud amid deep silence. What would the Conference decide? Would it declare war on the Soviets at once? There was a long pause. Front-bench officers were button-holing one another in private conversation. The troopers at the back remained motionless as before. After some minutes Dutoff rose and, amid tense silence, said: "Before the Orenburg Cossacks commit themselves to so serious a step as to crush the mutiny in Central Asia, they must first know for whom they are acting. Has Kerensky acted in such a way as to inspire the confidence of the Cossacks? Has he not allied himself in Petrograd with the very Soviets with whom he is now in conflict, in order to crush Korniloff? Have we any guarantee that he will establish a firm power in Russia, cease intriguing with Socialists and respect Cossack rights? Until he gives proof of this, I submit that the Orenburg Cossacks should not accept responsibilities outside their own territories." A resolution was framed, presented and accepted. In this resolution the policy of the

officer caste that controlled the Orenburg Cossacks was made clear. The time was not ripe for counter-revolution on an All-Russian scale. For the moment all that the officers could do was to concentrate on the task of preventing their power and privileges, based on military law, from being overwhelmed by the rising Red flood. The Cossack troopers were becoming restive under their rule, but the well-to-do Cossack cultivator class could be kept neutral. If the officer caste could tide over these critical times, foreign intervention might save them.

But the officer caste did not dominate the Conference without a protest. On the third day the silent mass at the back of the hall began to be articulate. The turn had come at last for the labouring Cossacks and for the troopers of the Cossack regiments at the front, whose voices had up till now been drowned in the trumpet calls of the generals on the front benches. The spokesman for the Orenburg Cossack division on the south-west front was a handsome young man of twenty-five. He was dressed in the simple uniform of a trooper. Timidly he rose on the tribune and haltingly began to speak. Unlike the Russian workman and common soldier of the regular army, he was unused to express his thoughts in words. "Let not the Cossacks separate themselves from their brothers, the Russian soldiers," he said, "for we are united in spirit with them. Our soldier comrades are sometimes weak, but their hearts are sound. It is our duty to help them and not to embitter them against us. We must therefore co-operate with their Soviets. Only a union between Cossacks and common soldiers can save Russia. We, Cossacks from the south-west front, look upon the Russian soldiers as our comrades. They and we must stand or fall together."

A silence came over the hall as the speaker finished.

The generals on the front bench were too astonished to utter a sound. Such a speech had never before been made by a Cossack trooper in Orenburg. And he had made it, too, without asking the permission of his superior officer! But before they had time to recover themselves, the delegate of the Cossack section of the Workers' Soviet in the South Ural mining area mounted the tribune and addressed the Conference. "We are all agreed," he said, "that there should be in Russia a strong and efficient Government. But some people want to establish that Government by relying upon the labouring masses and peasants of Russia, and there are others who think they can establish it by bolstering up a privileged class. We, Cossack workers, warn you, officers, against that course. If you try to destroy the Soviets, you will poison the source from whence courage and hope flows to the

Russian masses. Start on this mad game if you will, but in that case you leave us behind you."

That was too much for the front-bench officers. "Enough! Disgraceful! Insubordination!" was heard from these quarters. Since the offender could not be court-martialled for a speech in an assembly that called itself democratic, the next best thing to do was to exclude him and his associates from the sitting. It was therefore discovered that a number of members had incorrect mandates. By a curious coincidence the people affected were all the delegates from the Cossack troopers at the front, who had been "poisoned" by contact with revolutionary Soldiers' Soviets and the delegates from the Cossack workers' section of the Soviet in the Ural. These troublesome people were therefore excluded. Then the front-bench officers and their following, which consisted of pensioned non-commissioned officers from the *stanitzas*, all over fifty, continued their deliberations in peace in the name of the "free Orenburg Cossacks."

I now decided to visit the country surrounding Orenburg. When the Cossack Conference was finished, I hired a *tarantass* with two horses, and, armed with a map and a tea-kettle, set out into the wide, little-known lands to the east of the town. Behind me to the west and north lay the black-earth lands, dotted with pine forests of the Samara province, where I had recently been. On both sides of the Ural river, which flowed past the town of Orenburg, lay treeless rolling downs. The soil was jet-black wherever the plough had ruffled the surface. My *isvoschik* drove wildly along the open spaces, cracking his long whip round the horses' ears. Now and then we slowed up over boggy ground round a lake or a reedy bend in the Ural river, the banks of which we kept in sight all the time. We came to the first Cossack *stanitza*. Clean, well-built wooden houses with sheet-iron roofs lay on each side of a broad unpaved street. Everything was a picture of orderliness. In the centre of the village was a parade ground with gymnastic apparatus for Cossack troopers. A tall pole with a platform at the top indicated the century-old Cossack custom of lighting a beacon to warn neighbouring *stanitzas* when Tartar invasions threatened. But no Tartars had threatened this *stanitza* for many decades past. The Cossack youth had been mobilized by the Tsars to fight far away in Europe against enemies whose nationality they had never heard of, or against Russian workmen on strike in Petrograd and Moscow. In the large building in the middle of the *stanitza*, where the local Cossack military administration had its bureau, I met the local Ataman, a retired non-commissioned officer.

From him I gathered that, although there was nothing like Bolshevism among the members of this community, nevertheless the younger generation were getting restive, refusing to parade, deserting from the front in Europe, and coming back to their homes, and in general resenting the military obligations to which they were subjected. Several instances of insubordination had taken place recently. But on the other hand there were no agrarian disturbances here like those which were going on in European Russia at this time, for the simple reason that there were no landlords or territorial *seigneurs*. The land was the property of the community, and the allotments were large, each family getting twenty dessatines. The general appearance of the village denoted opulence. Barns were full and horses fat. In comparison with the peasant communes of the Samara Government, this was an economically privileged community. Revolution here would take the form only of throwing off the rule of an officer caste. But if the poor peasants and hungry workmen from Central European Russia came in here with the watchwords "Equal land allotments for all," and "Fixed state prices for corn," the whole *stanitza* would rise to a man to protect "Cossack rights."

After another hour's journey to the east, I reached the end of the Cossack territories, the chain of *stanitzas* which runs from the Caspian Sea to the heart of Siberia. To the east the black earth seemed to fade away. We crossed the Ural river by a ferry near a *stanitza* called Girjaly, and began to get into dry steppe country, where thin wiry grass replaced the luxuriant vegetation we had just seen. A camel caravan led by a Tartar passed. The air became drier and crisper. Away to the south-east, silhouetted against the deep-blue sky on the top of a low ridge, was an encampment of round, felt tents or *yurts*, the first unmistakable sign that we had got into the land of the nomad Tartars, or Kirghiz. The road ended, and we came to a spot out on the open steppe, where felt tents and mud hovels lay mingled side by side in picturesque confusion. This was a wool and skin trading centre on the edge of the Turgai province. To the east now lay a great expanse of dry steppe, or sheep-grazing country, stretching unbroken for 2,000 versts to the Chinese frontier.

There were two types of people inhabiting this trading centre. In the felt tents the Kirghiz Tartars lived. At the doors of the mud hovels I saw European faces. Russian traders and settlers had wandered in here from Central Russia in the last decades and were living in the closest economic and social relations with

the Tartars. I put up in the hovel of one of these immigrants, who was a friend of my *isvoschik*. His father had come from the Ukraine many years ago in order to escape from starvation through lack of land. Here in Asia he had pegged out unoccupied ground, on which he grew barley and buckwheat (the climate was too dry for anything else), grazed sheep, and traded with the Tartars. His hovel was very comfortable inside and quite clean. Persian rugs covered the walls, a fire of camel's dung smouldered on the floor, and the smoke went out through a hole in the roof. Divans and clean blankets surrounded the fire on two sides. In these surroundings we ate sheep kidneys, while the Kirghiz Tartars walked in to look at the new arrival. There had just been a meeting in the hovel where I was of the Land Committee of this part of the Turgai province. This was the firstfruit of the Russian Revolution in this remote part of Asia. Up till March 1917 the sole authority here had been the *stanovoye preestoff*, or local police official, appointed by the Tsarist military Governor of Central Asia. He had been assisted by a host of *uryadniki*, or rural gendarmes, who acted as spies on the population, collected taxes from them, and fed on them like bugs. The news came that the Tsar had abdicated six weeks after the event. At once the bugs made off post-haste to the nearest towns to hide in back streets. Then the Russians and nomad Tartars in this settlement sent off *djigits* (outriders) to neighbouring settlements, informed them of the news and suggested a gathering of the tribes. At this gathering Russian settler and nomad Tartar took part on terms of absolute equality. The first "Soviet of Nomads' and Settlers' Deputies" was formed for this part of the Turgai steppes. The Tsarist officials had gone. Only active productive workers were left.

Now came the question of the relation of this Soviet to neighbouring communities. To the west lay the Cossack *stanitzas*, which occupied the most fertile black earth in the territory. The Cossacks for some years past had been encroaching on the dry steppe. They had sent their herds in the spring to nibble at the choice patches of grass round the lakes in the neighbouring Turgai steppe. Collisions between Cossacks on the one hand and Tartars and Russian settlers on the other had occurred, and the Cossack generals had encouraged these because they generally ended in an enlargement of the territories which were under Cossack military law. Nomad Tartars, who had been deprived of their old grazing rights in the black-earth land to the west, and who had been pressed into the dry steppe, and Russian settlers, who had wandered in to escape starvation in

European Russia, were thus in danger of being brought under Cossack military law, forced to serve from nineteen to forty-five years of age, and to provide a horse and saddle. That danger had now gone, and the first instinctive act of this Turgai Soviet was to form a Land Committee to act as guardian of the barley lands and grazing ranches of the nomads and settlers, and to prevent immigration from Cossack territories and from Europe.

An old Kirghiz *aksakal*, or grey-beard, was sitting by the fire next to me. He described how in his youth he had grazed his horses where a Cossack *stanitza* now stood. If sufficient rifles could be obtained, he thought they ought to enforce their claims and get compensation from the Cossacks for the territories stolen from them. This, then, was the form which the agrarian revolution had taken on in the Turgai steppes by the autumn of 1917. The land-hungry nomad Tartars and Russian settlers were mobilizing against the privileged Cossack communities and claiming equal land allotments. And yet no one here had ever heard of the word Bolshevism.

The next day I visited the Kirghiz *yurts*. Approaching a Tartar encampment on foot is always a risky proceeding, unless one is protected with a gun or heavy stick. For ferocious dogs of the size of wolves fly at the visitor as soon as he is in sight. Having safely got through the barrage of wolf-dogs, I entered the *yurt* of one of the largest flock-owners in this part of the Turgai. The old Kirghiz who received me was dressed in an embroidered tunic, baggy leather trousers and skull-cap. His womenfolk, with white kerchiefs on their heads, were squatting round the fire in the middle of the round tent, attending to some boiling milk. As soon as we had sat down the women rose and removed the shoes first from the Kirghiz, then from me and from the Russian settler who accompanied me, put slippers on our feet, and poured out *kumiss* into a bowl, which they set before us. Round the entrance of the *yurt* some Kirghiz and Russian children were playing a game with sheeps' bones. The deep tones of a camel caravan's bells sounded in the distance. The old Kirghiz sipped his bowl and puffed at his long Chinese pipe. The atmosphere was patriarchal, and it seemed impossible that at this very moment Russia was in the ferment of social revolution. Yet on a chest beside me lay a newspaper, published in the Kirghiz dialect, and a book of poems by Baitursunoff, a Tartar poet, whose verses, as I found out, were read in the nomad encampments in the remotest spots of this vast steppe. One or two of the poems were translated for me into Russian. They told of lovers' adventures on the steppe, of the spirits of lakes that

appear to horsemen, of battles with the Cossacks, and of mythical persons of past ages. And how long had this literature been in existence among the Kirghiz? I asked. It had sprung up since the March Revolution. Previously no Kirghiz printing press had been allowed by the Tsar's officials. The poems of Baitursunoff had been learned and passed on from *yurt* to *yurt*. Now they were published in print together with a weekly paper issued in Orenburg by a group of young Kirghiz, who had entered the Socialist Revolutionary Party, and were advocating the abolition of the Cossacks' agrarian privileges.

On the following day I returned to Orenburg and commenced the journey back towards European Russia.

I reached Samara on October 5th and took ship for Kazan, where I arrived two days later. Here I found myself in the cultural centre of the Volga Tartars, who number some eight millions. The old city, perched on a long ridge overlooking a great bend in the Volga, breathes the atmosphere of the past. The great tower, "Sum Bashi," takes the memory back to the days when the Tartar Khans levied tribute on Moscow. The Kremlin walls, surrounding a forest of golden cupolas, mark the era of the Slav domination. The old Governor's house in the Kremlin was occupied by the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet, and had a red flag on the roof—a sign of the new religion coming from the West. As in Orenburg, I found that the President of the Soviet was a Menshevik, a local journalist, who was now completely at the mercy of the soldiers of the garrison and the workmen of the leather tanning and soap factories of Kazan. While I was sitting with him in the audience room of the former Tsarist Governor, an officer came in to ask the President's help. The soldiers of the garrison had passed a resolution that the offices of the Commandant for the Kazan military area should be handed over to the Soldiers' Soviet, who should in future countersign all military orders. The President shrugged his shoulders helplessly. He could only try to influence the delegates at the sitting of the Soviet that evening, but, he said, they were all now Bolshevik in feeling, if not in name. He himself was thinking of resigning. In company with the Menshevik President I attended the meeting of the Soviet. There could be no mistake, the Soviet was the power dominating the city. The Second Revolution had in fact already taken place. The President was helpless. His advice was ignored. The workmen's delegates passed a resolution, ordering the removal of Kerensky's Food Controllers, and their replacement by Commissars of the Kazan Soviet.

In the lower part of the city, beneath the ridge on which the

Kremlin stood, was the Tartar quarter. Here the streets were narrow and bordered with rows of booths. The natives wore small round caps with a fur rim, their eyes were black and their skin dark. Here and there the minaret of a mosque rose to heaven. Camels floundered about in the mud. In a large red-brick building I found the bureau of the Volga Moslems' National Council. Here the intellectual youth among the Tartars congregated. I made the acquaintance of the educational section of the Council. The members were nearly all young men, who had studied in the Russian universities, spoke Russian, and in some respects had been half Russified. Their plans were, they said, to secure from whatever Government might rule in Russia in the future a wide cultural autonomy for the middle Volga and South-West Ural provinces, including Kazan, Simbirsk, Ufa, and parts of Samara and Orenburg. If they did not think of territorial autonomy or the establishment of a Turkish Empire in Asia again, they nevertheless seemed to look to Constantinople as the Mecca of their hopes. They wanted a cultural rapprochement between all the Turanian speaking races of Russia and the Near and Middle East. They took no interest in their fellow Moslems in Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia. Only those who spoke dialects of Turkish or Tartar concerned them.

On the following day, however, I came across another group among the Tartars, which had come into existence during the summer of 1917. I found the editor's office of the *Kizil Bairam* (Tartar for the *Red Flag*). This paper was published by the Social Democratic group of the Kazan Moslem workers, and was in direct opposition to the nationalists among the Volga Tartars. The spirit in the office of the *Kizil Bairam* was distinctly class-conscious and militant. The workers there did not call themselves Bolshevik, for the Socialist movement among the Tartars was yet young. The *Kizil Bairam*, I found, was supported by the Tartar transport workers on the Volga. They had forgotten all about Tartar history, were not interested either in cultural or territorial autonomy, and the Mahommedan religion to them was nothing more than a name. Continual contact with Russian peasants and transport workers on the Volga had made them think inter- racially. They associated with Russians in the Transport Workers' Union and had delegates on the Kazan Workmen's and Soldiers' Soviet. The intellectuals, whom I found editing this Moslem Socialist paper, repudiated all connection with the Pan-Turanian and other national movements. They called themselves Marxists, and also Pan-Islamists. When I asked them if Marxism, which was an international class move-

ment, could be reconciled with Pan-Islamism, which was religious and limited only to a part of humanity, I was told that there was no real inconsistency between the two ideas. Pan-Islamism, in fact, they said, in a modern form might well prove to be the best form of Marxism in Asia. For the Moslems were the best organized and most conscious people in Asia. The old Islamic religion had created a great spiritual community, but its ideas were now antiquated, and in order to bring in the new religion it was necessary to make use of the traditions, created by the old. The Mullahs would automatically lose their influence, and Marxist lecturers would take their place. The danger of the Turanian, Persian, Arabian and Afghan national movements was that they tended to split up the toiling masses of Asia into separate groups. It was not necessary, they thought, to pass through nationalist stages to reach the international. The Moslem religion embraced nearly every nationality in Asia, it was in fact an internationalist organization. Inspire it therefore with new ideas. The Volga Tartars, who for centuries had been in the closest contact with the Russian workers and peasants, were the people destined to carry the political and social ideas which arose in Russia into the heart of Asia. So spoke the Kazan Moslem Socialists, but their movement was only in its infancy in the autumn of 1917.

It was now the second week in October. The leaves were falling from the trees and the first nip of winter was already to be felt in the air. On October 17th I boarded an oil tank ship and sailed upstream from Kazan. After two days the old Kremlin walls of Nijni Novgorod hove in sight. The morning papers, which I bought on the quay, announced that the Novgorod regiments on the north-west front had passed a resolution through their Soldiers' Soviets that they would remain in the trenches till the first snow and then go home. In another column were details of great agrarian disturbances in the provinces of Pensa and Tamboff. Landlords' mansions had been sacked. There were killed and wounded. The local Socialist Revolutionary paper announced that in four districts of the Novgorod provinces the peasants, without waiting for any instructions from the Land Committee, had seized five landlords' estates and were parcelling the land and much valuable live-stock. The Germans had just occupied Riga. A naval battle was proceeding in the Baltic, a railway strike was affecting several trunk lines, and the Coalition Government was talking of evacuating Petrograd. The sands were running out. It was necessary to get to Petrograd without delay. Everyone instinctively felt that a new phase in the Revolution was approaching.

CHAPTER IX

FALL OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS COALITION—ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS

THE Korniloff episode left the situation where it was after the fall of the First Coalition. The middle-class parties, notably the Cadets, had cleverly resigned from the Government on the arrival of the news that Korniloff had come out against Kerensky. They thereby cleared themselves of any possible entanglements with the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Soviet, and held themselves ready for the service of the dictator, as soon as he should be established in power. In view of these facts it was not surprising that even among the ranks of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries in the Central Soviet (especially among the followers of Tchernoff), voices arose demanding that a "true democratic" Government should be formed, without the participation of the Cadets, who were so obviously using the Coalition as a cloak to prepare the way for the dictatorship of the middle classes. It was therefore decided to call another State Conference, but this time with the middle classes left out. The initiative in summoning it was taken, not by Kerensky, but by the Soviets. Invitations were sent to the co-operative organizations, the unions of the free professions, the workers' trades unions, which had grown in membership from 300,000 in March to nearly a million and a half in October, and the political parties standing upon the Socialist (Marxian and non-Marxian) platform. This Conference met in the last week of September, and was in effect the left wing of the State Conference, which had met under the auspices of Kerensky in August. Kerensky in the meantime carried on the Government with the aid of a truncated Ministry of politically colourless persons, pending the decision of the Democratic Conference.

From the outset the proceedings of the Conference were not harmonious. The Bolsheviks were headed by Trotsky, who was now President of the completely Bolshevik Petrograd Soviet, and who led his party into the Democratic Conference, not in

order to assist in creating another Coalition Government, but in order to make trumpet-calls to the country to rally round the Soviets. Having made his appeal, he and his whole group of delegates dramatically left the Conference as a proof that they meant what they said. That was a serious blow to the prestige of the Conference, for the Bolsheviks were now the most influential socialist party in Northern Russia, having in the last two months been capturing Soviets in town and village. But it now appeared that even in the ranks of the "Revolutionary Democracy," which monopolized the Conference, harmony was wanting, for a conflict arose between the Socialist Revolutionaries following Tchernoff and those following Breshk Breshkofsky (the "Mother of the Revolution," as she was called). Tchernoff was accused of having been engaged in Zimmerwald propaganda, while he had been in exile in Switzerland two years previously, and of pandering now to the new Left Socialist Revolutionary wing, who were in sympathy with the Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks under Tseretelli remained, as usual, like Sphinxes.

The first resolution was brought forward by the Tchernoff Socialist Revolutionaries of the Centre. That resolution demanded that the new Government should definitely exclude the middle-class parties and all who, like the Cadets, had compromised themselves with the Korniloff counter-revolution. This resolution was passed, and everything seemed to be moving in the direction of a pure Socialist Government of moderate tendencies to take control pending the elections for the National Assembly. But suddenly Tseretelli, on behalf of the Mensheviks, came forward with a resolution to the effect that the new Government "should consist of all live elements in the country, including the non-socialist parties, if any of the latter were ready to serve the State conscientiously." To the astonishment of observers, this resolution was also passed. What was now to be done? The Cadets were under all circumstances to be excluded, but non-socialist parties were to be allowed into the new Government. Inasmuch, however, as the Cadets were the only non-socialist party of any consequence, the two resolutions contradicted one another. And this was the result after three days' debating. Two more days of discussion followed, during which nothing further was accomplished, except recriminations between the Centre and Right Socialist Revolutionaries and fruitless attempts at conciliation on the part of the co-operators. Thereupon Kerensky had to intervene. He summoned the parties and told them that, as they could not agree, he would assume the responsibility of forming a new Government. This he proceeded to do. A

Government of more or less unknown people was constructed, M. Tereschenko retaining the most important post, that of Foreign Minister, because his presence at the Foreign Office "gave confidence to our noble Allies." Kerensky also, with the consent of the middle-class parties, created a so-called "Pre-Parliament," a sort of second edition of the Moscow State Conference, to sit permanently till the elections for the National Assembly. Thus ended "Revolutionary Democracy's" last attempt at cabinet-making. Despised by the counter-revolution, it was being driven out of one provincial Soviet after another, as the hour for action in the face of catastrophe approached. For the leadership of the Revolution was passing to a party which not only knew how to talk, but how to act.

Behind the Bolsheviks were now mobilizing the most politically conscious and educated elements of the working classes. That part of the industrial workers of the big centres like Petrograd, Moscow, Nijni Novgorod and Kharkoff, who after the March Revolution allowed the "compromising intellectuals," Mensheviks and "Tchernoff" Socialist Revolutionaries to control their Soviets, were now, under the pressure of hunger and under the fear of impending catastrophe, transferring their allegiance to Lenin. The Bolshevik "islands," which in the middle of the summer had included only Kronstadt, some Petrograd factories, Schlussemburg and Tsaritzin, had now increased and become a veritable archipelago. What was the cause of this change of working-class opinion in the industrial centres during the autumn of 1917? The Marxist can, I think, fully justify his case by pointing to the economic pressure, which was changing the mass psychology, and which had not gone so far as to create a feeling of hopelessness in the mind of the proletarian. The sufferings of the working classes from cold and hunger were not so great at this time as they were at later periods of the Revolution, but they were great enough to stimulate the spirit of rebellion and to hold at bay the spirit of apathy. In other words, it would seem as if the rebellious psychology in the masses was greatest at the point where the hunger curve was half-way up to its highest point.

What, then, was the position of the Russian workers of the industrial centres in November 1917? The country was flooded with paper money, prices were rising, essentials of life diminishing, while no serious effort was being made by the officials of the Coalition Government or by the "compromising" Soviet to check the orgy of speculation and the wild sale and mortgaging of private estates and industries to foreign banks. Real wealth

was being daily destroyed, owing to the maintenance of a fifteen million army, a good five million of which were now deserters, roaming about the country and living a semi-parasitic, semi-bandit life. Huge war industries were kept going for purely unproductive purposes. The rouble had collapsed and bore only a fraction of its gold value, when exchanged against commodities. The process, of course, had been going on for some years. In the Moscow industrial district the prices of seven necessities of life had risen on the open market between 1914 and 1915 by 23 per cent., between 1915 and 1916 by 79 per cent., between 1916 and 1917 by 124 per cent. Wages of skilled workers in the same area had risen between 1914 and 1915 from an average of 221 roubles a month to 251, i.e. by 10 per cent.; between 1915 and 1916 from 241 roubles a month to 285, i.e. by 15 per cent.; between 1916 and 1917 from 285 roubles a month to 429, i.e. 50 per cent. Thus the wages rise during the period of the March Revolution, considerable though it was, had been more than counterbalanced by the rise in prices. Moreover, the rise in wages had been brought about by the activity of the Government printing press, which created paper wealth without material backing. The possessors of this paper wealth, which was called at the time "kerenskys," to immortalize the Kerensky period of the Revolution, were in effect given the power not to buy necessities of life, because there were none, or very little, but to possess a mortgage on the future wealth of the country. But in this scramble for prospects of future wealth the industrial proletariat was left far behind. The owners of factories, estates, mines and banking shares and their foreign creditors got the pull. For as real commodities decreased, the prospects of inflated profits in what remained rose as long as the capitalist system lasted. This process, which had begun at the commencement of the war, assumed vast dimensions now. In 142 cotton and metal undertakings of the Moscow district the average profit for 1914 was 16.5 per cent., for 1915 39.7 per cent., for 1916 53.1 per cent., and for the first part of 1917 75.2 per cent. These enormous paper profits were obtained largely by cornering stores of raw material and reducing output with a view to selling at monopoly prices. The profits were then sent abroad in the form of credit. English and French banks became heavily interested, and, as the economic crash approached, became more and more the trustees for their Russian clients, whose deposits and shares they held. A general tendency was observed, as the prospects for the social revolution increased during 1917, for Russian industrialists, mineowners and financiers to hide behind Allied banks. Already before the

war foreign capital had got a grip over Russian industry. In January 1914 587 million roubles of foreign capital were officially registered in Russian industries. Besides this there was a much larger sum of foreign capital, registered as native Russian capital. This, according to W. S. Siew,¹ amounted to 1½ milliard roubles in 1914. During the war this process went on apace. By 1917 many of the big mining concerns in the Urals had become the properties of English banks and syndicates. Thus the Kyshtim Copper Corporation in Western Siberia and the Bogoslovsk Copper and Iron Syndicate in the North Urals had since 1914 been turned over to an international financial concern containing English capital, at the head of which stood Mr. Urquhart. The Don-Azoff bank in Petrograd, which had carried through the operation on behalf of the Russian interests, had cleared one million roubles profit on the transaction, and the credit for this amount was transferred to London. Seventy per cent. of the capital invested in the Don iron mines and smelting furnaces was French and Belgian, and the shares of the companies were quoted in Paris and Brussels. Ninety-five per cent. of the capital invested in coal mines on the Don was French and Belgian. Ninety per cent. of the platinum and copper exploitation of the Urals and Caucasus was the monopoly of British and American syndicates. The tramways of the chief towns were Belgian concerns, and 70 per cent. of the electrical companies were run by foreign capital under Russian names. The skilled workers of the industrial centres of Russia were thus gradually reaching the position of tribute-payers in the form of cheap labour to the finance-capital of the Allies. The Russian bourgeoisie had the means of escape from catastrophe by sending their profits and shares abroad and by selling or mortgaging them to foreign banks. But Russian labour was falling deeper and deeper into the meshes of the international slave-driver.

I remember having the state of affairs very vividly brought home to me one day in October, when I visited a big metal works on the Vassily Ostroff, which had recently been sold to a syndicate of financiers in Allied countries. I had been to this place earlier in the summer, to a meeting of newly-formed shop committees. At that time the men were obediently following the advice of the Menshevik Minister of Labour, and were not interfering with the employers and their management. Now, however, I found a very different state of affairs. Half the hands had been dismissed because, as it was alleged, there was not sufficient raw material to employ more. The shop stewards'

¹ *Russia's State Bankruptcy and Foreign Capital*, Petrograd, 1917.

committee was in a little shed in the big turning department. One of the men took me across the yards to the store department, where I saw large piles of iron plates and anthracite coal. "This was imported from England last year, and there is more lying on the syndicate's account in Archangel," said the man; "but it is not being used because the syndicate can make higher profits by producing half the output, dismissing half the men and making the rest work overtime. We have, therefore, decided that the central shop stewards' committee (*zentralny fabrichny-zavodskiy komitet*) shall assume control over these works, divide the raw materials, examine all the books and countersign all orders of the management. Otherwise there will be further dismissals from these works, but no reductions in the syndicate's profits."

As winter approached, Petrograd came to be a city living solely on the old, accumulated stores. The food trains destined for the Public Food Controller of the city were looted on the way from the south by hungry peasants and by the town populations of the northern provinces. The further north a city was situated, the greater would be the number of wagons, which would be uncoupled *en route* by wayside communities. The Pre-Parliament and the new Kerensky Government were helpless, and could only emit laconic protests. Meanwhile resolutions began to come in to the Petrograd Soviet from one soldiers' Soviet after another, announcing that the men had decided to remain in the trenches till the first snows, and then would demobilize with or without permission.

The Government had indeed lost its last shadow of authority, but "Revolutionary Democracy" in the old Central Executive of the Soviet, which had been elected in June, and still pretended to represent the "revolutionary workers, peasants and soldiers," made one last despairing effort. It worked out a programme of peace conditions, which were to be presented to the Allies at a Conference in Paris. It had been decided by the Allied statesmen that, in order to give some consolation to the Russian revolutionaries for the refusal to let the Socialists of all countries meet at Stockholm, a Conference of the Allies, at which the Russian Government and the Central Soviet Executive should be represented, should meet in Paris to "consider on what conditions peace with the Central Powers could be made." The Menshevik Skobelev was appointed as the Soviet delegate, and the Central Soviet Executive prepared a long series of directions, which should guide him at the Conference. These directions were published in the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary press in the third week of October. They

were indeed startling; all the more so since the Bolsheviks had nothing to do with their composition. Peace, according to these directions, must strictly follow the principle of "no annexations and the right of self-determination." In order to secure this, it was not necessary for Russia to reconquer the Baltic provinces and Poland from the Germans, for if this were demanded, the Germans might with reason demand that the war should go on till the Egyptians had reconquered Egypt and till Ireland was independent. For similar reasons, it was unnecessary to demand the unconditional separation of the non-German states of Austria. "Revolutionary Democracy" had summoned courage at last. But, alas! it was treading on somebody's very sensitive toes. War Cabinets in London and Paris were not used to this plain talk, and did not like to hear the truth expressed quite so bluntly. Was it surprising, therefore, that a few days after the publication of the "Skobelev directions," news came that the French press was agitating for the Tsarist General, Alexeieff, to be the representative of the "true Russia" at the coming Paris Conference, vague hints being dropped that delegates from "irresponsible bodies" were not wanted? As the hints were not taken, it required more plain speaking. Secret treaties and divisions of the Teuton bear-skin in Europe, Asia and Africa were not affairs fit for Russian workmen and soldiers to meddle with, although, of course, they could bleed for them—indeed, their blood was demanded. This lesson had to be taught once for all. Therefore Mr. Bonar Law was put up in the British House of Commons to inform the "Revolutionary Democracy" in Petrograd that the Paris Conference was summoned, not for working out peace conditions at all, but for considering the best means for "more effectively prosecuting the war." *Exit* Russian "Revolutionary Democracy" from the stage of international politics!

The agents of Allied finance-capital now got bolder. They felt that it was a case of now or never. For underground rumblings were to be heard—rumours of Bolshevik Red Guards in the Petrograd factories, of workmen rushing to these new "colours" and so on—all very disturbing to those reclining on the velvet cushions of the Embassies on the banks of the Neva. Sir George Buchanan and the French Ambassador thereupon made a *démarche* before Kerensky. It was stated with emphasis and with no uncertain voice that the Allies could not allow "anarchy" to continue, that energetic measures, long delayed, must now be applied, otherwise the Allies could not undertake to give "necessary material and financial support to Russia." The Russian bourgeoisie had to look out now, or else English banks would no longer

provide the necessary asylums for paper war-profits, or take over at other than knock-out prices Russian industrial syndicates' shares, or promise to guarantee further loans. Not content with this effort, however, Sir George Buchanan received officially representatives of the "Military Council of the Cossacks." Now, this body had just set itself up as an autonomous political power in the Cossack territories of South-East European Russia and was controlled by Tsarist generals and reactionary leaders from the four Dumas, who had been assembling down there for some months past, because Kerensky was considered too "revolutionary." Sir George expressed his sympathy with these "loyal" Cossacks, who were supposed to be going to assist in the regeneration of Russia and the establishment of "discipline" in the army. It was as if the Russian Ambassador in London had received a deputation of Sinn Feiners and expressed his "sympathy" with them. A day or two later came news that the Tsarist General Gurko, who had been relieved of his command by Kerensky, and was under arrest in his rooms for implication in Monarchist intrigues, was released mysteriously from prison and spirited away from Archangel on board a British man-of-war!

To complicate matters still more the Germans began advancing on the Baltic front, occupied Riga, and attacked and sank some ships of the Baltic Fleet. Russian soldiers were leaving the front in masses, declaring they would not fight till they knew the contents of the secret treaties. At this point the non-party War Minister in Kerensky's make-shift Government, M. Verkhofsky, conceived an idea. Russia, he said, in an interview given to a Cadet paper, was not and never had been in a position economically to endure the strain of supporting a 15 million army. It was necessary to reduce this army and to maintain a small force, which the country could support, to act as a defence against German invasion. All offensive plans must be abandoned.

He proposed to wink at the mass desertions, which were going on—to legalize them in fact by an official demobilization order for three classes. Reliable units would be formed at the front and volunteers called for. Within two days from the publication of this interview it was announced that Verkhofsky had resigned his office on account of ill-health and was leaving for a monastery on an island in Lake Ladoga, where he was to "take a holiday." Allied Military Missions had expressed disapproval of these schemes, which did not offer a prospect of a big "spring offensive."

West European Socialists and Labour critics, who condemn the Bolsheviks for having seized power in November 1917, are

either wilfully blind to, or else painfully ignorant of, the situation which had arisen in Russia during the Kerensky period of the Revolution. No Western European labouring class has ever yet had to face such a position as that which faced the workers of Russia on the eve of the November Revolution. If Russia was to continue the war, she must of necessity become a colony of one of the two belligerent capitalist alliances in Europe. This fate was inevitable as long as Russia remained economically undeveloped and politically at the mercy of foreign Imperialism. For what was Russia's position on the eve of the Great War? A large part of her wealth was in native, unworked raw materials, and her industries and railways were insufficient to enable her to live without a large import of foreign capital, manufactured goods and technical appliances from the West. The last two items would under any circumstances have been necessary even under a Socialist system, and, properly regulated, could not harm public economy. It was the import of capital (that is, surplus of production over consumption in the West) which reacted so fatally upon the social and political development of the Russian people. For the political influences that stood behind the import of this foreign capital aimed at bringing Russia to the level of the Asiatic and African colonies of England, France and Germany, at converting her to a recruiting ground for cheap blackleg labour, whereby the finance-capitalists of the West could depress the wage markets in their own countries. They aimed at making Russia a place for mobilizing human cannon fodder for the quarrels of the militarists of Europe. The Russian people were thus prevented from developing along their own lines; they were unable to work out a social system which did not tally with the plans of the foreign Embassies and Military Missions.

At the same time Russia differed from purely Asiatic countries in the fact that she had important native industries. Russian industries, though few and satisfying only a small proportion of the needs of her total population, were nevertheless equipped with the latest technical appliances. The Russian urban proletariat, though only a very small section of the population, was nevertheless the best organized and the most class-conscious in Eastern Europe. It had shown remarkable powers of political organization. The oppressive nature of the Tsarist regime had prevented the Labour intellectuals from rising out of their class, and they had remained in the forefront of the revolutionary movement. Unlike purely Eastern lands, like Turkey and Persia, therefore, Russia possessed a class-conscious proletarian element, which was well aware of the fate awaiting it at the hands

of foreign finance-capital in the event of a long-protracted war. As the European war dragged on, it exposed the Russian urban proletariat and that part of the peasantry which was engaged in industry to the danger of becoming the galley-slaves of foreign financiers, who were claiming an uncontrolled right to exploit Russia in liquidation of war loans. Unlike the inhabitants of African and Asiatic colonies, however, the Russian urban proletariat was conscious of this threatening slavery. Those who took the Menshevik view, and who maintained that an uneducated proletariat like the Russian, with a large number of illiterates, should not have dared to attack the fortress of international capitalism, because it would be incapable of running the State machine which it might capture, forgot that the Russian proletariat had had the best education in the world. It had learnt in the school of bitter experience through its long existence under the joint exploitation of a feudal aristocracy and a demoralized native bourgeoisie in alliance with foreign financiers. The oppressive nature of the finance-capitalists' operations was more sensibly felt in a "colonial area" like Russia than in the Western countries. This was particularly the case after a long destructive war, which had reduced the "colonial area" to a state of complete exhaustion by the requisition of human cannon fodder in payment for past loans. It was natural, therefore, that a readiness to rebel against the war and against slavery under the foreign financiers, and a tendency to search for a new form of society should have appeared first in countries like Russia.

Since 1916 Russia had become a passive object in the war, not an active participant. The really interested parties were in the West, where two World Powers were engaged in deadly conflict. This conflict had been long preparing, and had its roots in the competition between German and Anglo-French finance-capital. Between 1886 and 1911 Germany's production of coal had risen 218 per cent., English production only 72 per cent.; Germany's production of pig iron had risen 387 per cent., England's 30.6 per cent.; Germany's production of steel had risen 1,335 per cent., England's 154 per cent. These figures are sufficient proof that England's heavy industries and the finance-capital behind them had met a dangerous competitor, which was threatening to oust them from the colonial markets of the world. It was becoming increasingly necessary for them to prevent German big businesses from getting control of Russia's vast raw material resources. Hence it was not surprising that the Board of Trade confidential reports in 1915 advised utilizing the war to capture the Russian market from the "Hun," and that the promoters of the Bagdad

Railway scheme in Berlin should have welcomed the Kaiser's declaration of war on Russia with the cry "Gott strafe England!"

But Western capitalism did not only regard Russia as a market for export. More important was she as a source from which to draw raw materials and human cannon fodder. In this respect the German capitalists were behind their Anglo-Saxon and French competitors. For their industrial system was younger, and it absorbed most of the surplus capital in the land. The older capitalisms of France and England were able to launch out on more ambitious schemes. They were able, not only to conquer export markets, but to assimilate whole populations to their economic and military systems. The greatest pretensions in respect of military assimilation had been shown by the French bourgeoisie, whose attention had been particularly riveted on Russia. By the war of 1871 they lost, not only the prospect of exploiting the coal and iron mines of Alsace-Lorraine, but also those military resources in man power by which they might hope to regain them. Man power had to be bought somewhere, and from a strategic point of view the most advantageous place to buy it was in Russia. But gold was needed, for the Tsar's Ministers had their price. The savings of the French peasants were therefore exported in the form of loans. These loans were applied not so much for industrial development as for military purposes. They were the basis of the Dual Alliance and of the Franco-Russian Military Convention of 1894. This Convention guaranteed against gold loans Russian man power for the French bourgeoisie in any future war for the recovery of the Alsace-Lorraine coal and iron mines. The liabilities of the Russian bureaucracy to the Paris Stock Exchange rose rapidly. In 1902 French capital invested abroad amounted to 18 milliard francs, of which 10 milliard francs was invested in Russia. In 1913 an inspired article in the *Echo de Paris* announced that France had lent Russia 17 milliard francs and would lend 2½ milliards more in annual payments of half a milliard, on condition that this money was spent in part on strategic railways in Poland and in part for purposes of mobilization. The Franco-Russian Naval Convention of 1912,¹ was accompanied by a political agreement under which Russia was pledged not to conclude any agreements affecting the *status quo* without first consulting France. The Anglo-French Naval Agreement of the same year was in effect also an Anglo-Russian Naval Convention, which rounded off the Triple Entente and created a united strategic front.

¹ See Petrograd *Retch*, No. 201, 1912.

Thus the alliance of Anglo-French heavy industry, finance-capital and militarism had successfully bound down the Russian masses on the eve of the war. And the effete agrarian aristocracy round the Court of the Tsar prolonged its existence and its political privileges by mortgaging its subjects to foreign banks. Meanwhile Russia's State debt mounted steadily. In 1916 it was already 30 milliard roubles, the interest of which was more than half the revenue of the country in that year. As the war proceeded and war materials were supplied to Russia in large quantities, the pile of paper debt mounted higher. By October 1917 the total debt amounted to 70 milliard roubles, of which 15,700 million roubles were internal long-term loans, 25,000 million roubles foreign long-term loans (15,500 million owing to France, 7,500 million to England, and 3,230 million to other lands), 28,300 million roubles in paper money and short-term loans. The interest and sinking fund on all this was 4½ milliard roubles, which was more than the whole State revenue in 1916. Of this over 2 milliard roubles was directly payable to foreign banks and Governments, and the time was not far distant when the whole Russian debt would have to be taken over as a mortgage to foreign banks in guarantee for further financial assistance in carrying on the war. Indeed, the process of handing over native industries to foreign banks was already far advanced by the autumn of 1917, and the Russian bourgeoisie was gradually ceasing to exist as an independent class and was becoming more and more openly the agent of Allied finance-capital in Russia. Hence its interest in the war; hence its parrot cry, "War to the bitter end!"

The inability of the opposing Imperialist camps in Europe to agree upon a partition of Russia and of the other colonial and semi-colonial markets was certainly regarded by the Russian revolutionaries of all shades as one of the principal causes of the European War. If it had not broken out in 1914, they believed that it would certainly have broken out at some later date. They half welcomed the war as the outward sign of the decay of the cruel finance-capitalist system with its restless hunt for colonial spheres and its anarchical export of capital and recruiting of human lives in the interest of profit. The Russian colonial area was, they said, one of the prizes for which the finance-capitalists of the Allied countries and of the Central Powers fought between 1914 and 1918. While robbers were quarrelling they could recapture stolen goods, bring Russia out of the clutches of foreign finance-capital, and facilitate the establishment of an independant national economy on a socialist basis. The

idea, widely spread at the time in England by the agents of finance-capital and naively accepted in Germany by socialist-pacifist pedants of the type of Kautsky, that the Bolsheviks in coming out of the European War were assisting the Prussian Imperialists, is seen in view of the facts to be an illusion. On the contrary, if Russia was to be saved from becoming a colony of one or other or of both of the European finance-capitalist groups, it was necessary that she should cut herself free from those fetters, which were binding her as a slave to the war chariots of the Entente, and adopt a neutral attitude to the Central Powers. In order to accomplish this, the Russian proletariat was bound to remove the Russian bourgeoisie from power and initiate a peace policy. This peace policy was not the fruits of pacifist ideology. It was the first evidence of *Real-politik*, which the Russian Revolution produced after March 1917. The watchwords of the Soviet were—peace, land, and workers' control. Workers' control over industry was needed, if the Russian proletariat were not to become the galley-slaves of the West European Stock Exchanges; land had to be handed over to the communes, if the landlords were not to rob the Russian peasants by hiding behind foreign banks; above all, peace was needed to secure the neutrality of Russia and her economic development on her own lines. The November Revolution of 1917 was, in a sense, a national uprising against foreign exploiters.

In the third week of October the leaders of the Bolshevik Central Committee met at Petrograd. The question before them was: had the time come to assume the control of the country, relying on the workmens', soldiers' and peasants' Soviets, and to carry out the popular programme of peace, land, and workers' control? The objective circumstances within the country favoured the attempt, but the international situation was uncertain. Could socialist reconstruction with the aid of Soviets be carried through? Could production be raised, or even prevented from falling, while the country was isolated, perhaps at war with the Entente, and blockaded by a hostile Germany? For neutrality in the Imperialist war could probably only be bought at the price of economic isolation. The mere thought of this frightened a large number of Bolshevik leaders into the belief that now was not the time to assume power, that it would probably be best to wait until the Imperial belligerents had bled themselves a little whiter, and meanwhile to run the risk of an Entente military dictatorship under the cover of the National Assembly and with the assistance of the Russian bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Lenin and his followers in the Bolshevik

Central Committee did not see such practical difficulties in dealing with the two capitalist belligerents. Lenin especially insisted that it was necessary to assume the power, in order to control the elementary forces of the Revolution, which were already breaking loose in anarchic forms. If this were done, he said, it would be possible to demobilize the old army, to establish some sort of order in the liquidation of the agrarian estates, and finally to commence the process of socializing the principal industries. The immense area of Russia, he said, would make it difficult for either the German or the Allied Imperialists to invade and annihilate her Soviet Government. European finance-capital was sharply divided into two bitterly hostile camps. This made union against the Soviet Revolution in Russia exceedingly improbable, at any rate for the present.

Lenin's view gained ground. At a secret sitting of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee in the middle of October it was decided to advise the Petrograd workmen, the garrison of the city and the Kronstadt sailors to arrest the Government of Kerensky, and to declare the coming Second Soviet Congress the supreme authority in the Republic. The die was cast. In the last days of October we heard that a "Military Revolutionary Committee" had mysteriously appeared in Petrograd and had declared itself "independent of Kerensky's Government."

On November 4th I was present at the sitting of the Pre-Parliament in the Marinsky Palace. The Cadets had been attacking the Menshevik Internationalists and the *Novaya Zhizn* group, which ran Maxim Gorky's paper, and were accusing them of Zimmerwald propaganda among the troops. The Cadet Adjemoff read out long extracts from the Zimmerwald resolutions, which set forth the tactics for internationalist propaganda in the army. The left wing of the Mensheviks, led by Martoff, and the *Novaya Zhizn* group, led by Sukhanoff, cheered each clause of the Zimmerwald resolutions and were answered by shouts from the Cadets, "See what traitors are sitting here!" Presently Kerensky arrived, looking very serious, and asked leave to speak. He had news, he said, that a body called the "Military Revolutionary Committee" had been formed for the purpose of deposing his Government. That Committee was composed of notorious Bolsheviks, who were engaged in traitorous propaganda. The time had come to act. Whereupon loud cheers came from the Cadets and cries, "So you are beginning to see that at last!" Warrants were out for the arrest of the Committee, and meanwhile the official organ of the Bolshevik party, the *Rabochy Put*, was suspended. Then, as if to show that he was still the "impartial

Kerensky," defending "the country and the Revolution from attacks both from the Right and from the Left," he declared that he had ordered the *Nashy Rodina*, an organ that was carrying on Monarchist propaganda, to be also suspended. This was Kerensky's last speech in public before his fall. He remained true to himself to the end, spending his time honestly trying to reconcile two irreconcilables, and being finally abandoned by both.

In the lobbies I met a prominent member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who told me they had information that the Bolshevik *coup d'état* was only a matter of days. At the Post and Telegraph Office already Bolshevik Commissioners were appointed, while the sentries were letting all who gave Bolshevik passwords go by, and were scowling on officials of Kerensky's Government. A little further on I saw Martoff and Sukhanoff with grave faces engaged in the most earnest conversation. "We cannot accept responsibility for such action," I heard Martoff say with a gesture. Evidently the Zimmerwald resolutions which he had just applauded half an hour before gave no justification in his mind for a military *coup d'état*. This was typical of the attitude of the Mensheviks, who were revolutionary only in words.

It was then evening, and I repaired to the Smolny Institute, where the Central Executive of the old Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Soviet had their offices. I found the members of the Executive very depressed. Reports from the provinces showed that the Bolshevik agitation for an immediate summoning of a Second Soviet Congress had met with great response. The Soviets of the northern provinces and the Soldiers' Soviets on the north-west front had already elected their delegates, who were arriving. They had done, said the Menshevik Central Executive, everything to prevent the summoning of this Second Soviet Congress, because they considered it useless. The National Assembly elections were shortly to take place, and this "democratic" body, not the Soviet Congress, should have the decisive word. The Soviets, they said, from this time forth should withdraw from the front rank and, continue only as industrial committees to advise the National Assembly. As I passed out of the Smolny Institute I heard roars of applause issuing from the great hall. The Petrograd Soviet was sitting, and Trotsky was making a rousing speech. Delegates for the Second Soviet Congress were arriving. All was bustle and hurry, and a look of confidence was on everyone's face. "Demos" was arising from the depth, crude and defiant. Representatives

of "Revolutionary Democracy," sitting upstairs in a room all to themselves, seemed strangely isolated from realities.

On the following morning, November 7th, I went again to the Smolny Institute, where the Petrograd Soviet was having a sitting to elect its delegates to the Second Soviet Congress, which was to meet that afternoon. Trotsky was in the chair, and on the tribune stood the same short, bald-headed little man that I had seen six months before leading the tiny Bolshevik group in the First Soviet Congress. It was Lenin without his moustache, which he had shaved off, in order to change his appearance during his period of forced concealment, now drawing to a close. The Petrograd Soviet was now one solid phalanx of Bolshevik Deputies, and roar after roar of applause swept the hall, as Lenin spoke of the coming Soviet Congress as the only organ which could carry through the Russian workers', soldiers' and peasants' revolutionary programme. Then someone at my side whispered that news had just come that the Military Revolutionary Committee, with the aid of Red Guards from the factories and part of the garrison, had occupied the Winter Palace and arrested all the Ministers, with the exception of Kerensky, who had escaped in a motor-car. I repaired to the Bolshevik party bureau on the lower floor. Here I found a sort of improvised revolutionary intelligence department, from which delegates were being despatched to all parts of the city with instructions, and whither they were returning with news and reports. Upstairs, in the bureau of the old Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary Executive, the silence of the grave reigned. A few girl typists were sorting papers, and the editor of the *Izvestia*, Rosanoff, was still trying to keep a steady countenance.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the great hall was full of delegates from all parts of the country, waiting for the opening of the Second Soviet Congress. The Bolshevik benches were crowded, and held fully 50 per cent. of the Congress. A good second to them were the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, the coming peasants' party, which, though unrepresented in the lists for the National Assembly through technical hindrances, had by this time captured the bulk of the peasant Soviets of North Russia. Upon the platform mounted the members of the old Executive, which had been elected by the First Soviet Congress in June, when the Mensheviks and Right Socialist Revolutionaries were as numerous as the Bolsheviks and their allies in the peasants' party were in this Congress. The Menshevik Dan was in the chair. "We have met," he began gravely, "under the most

peculiar circumstances. On the eve of the elections for the National Assembly the Government has been arrested by one of the parties in this Congress. As spokesman of the old Executive I declare this action to be unwarrantable. The Executive has done its duty by preparing in the last six months the ground for the democratic National Assembly. It now lays down its office and leaves the election of the new Presidium to the Second Soviet congress." The delegates thereupon voted, and the Bolshevik Sverdloff became chairman. A member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party now rose on a point of order. "We are living in strange times," he began. "Three of our party comrades, members of the Government, are at this very moment besieged in the Winter Palace, where they are being bombarded by gunboats, manned by the supporters of the majority of this Congress. We demand their immediate release!" he roared, thumping his fist upon the table, while derisive shouts arose from the body of the hall. When he had finished, up rose Trotsky, cool and ever ready with an answer. "That sort of speech comes badly from a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party," he began, "for that party has shared joint responsibility for a Government, which has during the last four months kept under arrest a number of *our* party comrades, and has put to watch over the rest of us the members of the old Tsarist secret police!" General sensation and tumult throughout the hall! Meanwhile the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary delegates left the Congress in a body, accompanied by groans and hisses. When they had gone it was possible to see by the empty places that they represented about 20 per cent. of the whole Congress. Such indeed had been the revolution in opinion since the First Congress.

Upon the platform now rose Lenin. His voice was weak, apparently with excitement, and he spoke with slight indecision. It seemed as if he felt that the issue was still doubtful, and that it was difficult to put forward a programme right here and now. A Council of Peoples' Commissars was being set up, he said, and the list would be submitted to the Congress. The Council would propose to the Congress three resolutions, upon the basis of which three decrees would be issued. The first was that steps should be taken to conclude an immediate armistice on the front, as a preliminary to peace negotiations. The invitation was to go out to the Allies and to the Central Powers, and the answers of each were to be awaited. The second decree would secure for the Land Committees of the peasant communes the right of temporary possession of the landlords' estates, pending

the introduction of detailed legislation. The third decree would give the factory workers power of control over all operations of the employers and managers. "We appeal to our comrades in England, France and Germany to follow our example and make peace with their fellow-workers over the heads of their capitalist Governments," concluded Lenin. "We believe that the nation which gave Karl Marx to the world will not be deaf to our appeal. We believe that our words will be heard by the descendants of the Paris Communards, and that the British people will not forget their inheritance from the Chartists."

Looking from the platform to the seated delegates, one could not help being struck with the fact that this was a young man's Congress. Whole rows of benches were filled with sturdy healthy young men from the Baltic Fleet and from the front. The skilled artisans of Moscow and Petrograd, dressed in their collarless black shirts and with fur caps on their heads, were also well to the fore. The peasant delegates were mostly young soldiers, who had gone to their villages and had taken the lead in the local communes. There were also a number of intellectual faces, mostly of young men who had during the autumn helped to form the new Left Socialist Revolutionary Party in the villages. Conspicuous by their absence were the middle-aged intellectuals, the old type of peasant with a long beard, and the old Socialist party leader, who had known thirty years of struggle and many prison sentences. Another point of interest was that this Congress showed a preponderance of delegates from the northern and central provinces, the very districts, in fact, where the largest number of poor half-proletarian peasants were found, where the skilled artisans dominated the towns and the land-hungry soldier deserters dominated the villages. There were relatively fewer delegates from the fertile south-east, from Siberia, and practically none from the Cossack territories. There were also no delegates from the Ukraine, because the Ukrainian peasants and soldiers were at this time gathering round their National *Rada* or Council at Kieff. This Second All-Russian Soviet Congress, therefore, marked the revolt of the workmen and poor peasants of North and Central Russia, with the passive consent of the more prosperous regions of the country, whose populations not yet felt the pangs of hunger, but were simply war-weary.

About ten o'clock at night I passed out of the Smolny Institute. In the street outside a group of workmen and Baltic Fleet sailors were discussing the Congress over a log fire. "We shall have to get off to the provinces now to work, explain and organize; not one of these delegates should be sitting there a moment longer

than necessary," I overheard one of them say. I passed along the banks of the Neva, already beginning to freeze in the shallows against the wharves. A raw November fog was blowing up from the Gulf of Finland. Opposite the Vassily Ostroff lay the cruiser *Aurora* and a destroyer with guns trained on the Winter Palace. "Stop!" shouted a voice, and I recognized a cordon of Red Guards across the road. I was near the Winter Palace, which was now the seat of the Military Revolutionary Committee. "Where are the Ministers of Kerensky?" I asked one of the guards. "Safe across the river in Petropavlovsk Fortress," came the laconic answer. "You can't pass along here," said another. But before I turned away I looked at a shell hole in the walls of the Palace. It was the mark of the only shot which had been fired by the cruiser—as a sign that the Winter Palace must be evacuated for the new rulers. I turned back and passed a batch of women, dressed in soldiers' uniforms. They were under arrest. They were from the famous "Women's Death Battalion"—poor girls from the villages, considered politically "reliable" by the Russian bourgeoisie, and therefore useful as cannon fodder against the Bolsheviks. Not knowing what to do when the crisis came, they remained round the Winter Palace, after the rest of the garrison had gone to the Military Revolutionary Committee. Now they were being marched off to the Petropavlovsk Fortress, from which, however, they were to be speedily released and sent home to their mothers.

I crossed the great Neva bridge and approached the Petropavlovsk fortress. The Red Guards were standing round the gates and the red flag was flying from the tower of this bastille of Tsarism. Yesterday, Kerensky's Government of doubting Thomases, directing the fortunes of a crumbling social order, was sitting in the Winter Palace. To-day, its members were in this fortress, where they had but yesterday kept the Bolshevik leaders. The wheel of fortune had gone round, and the Caliphs of the hour had passed in one night. With their passage the Russian Revolution entered upon a new phase. The Soviets of workmen, peasants and soldiers had come into their own.

CHAPTER X

FIRST DAYS OF THE NEW REGIME

By November 9th it was clear that power in Petrograd was actually in the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee, acting in the name of the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress. This all seemed to me at the time very ridiculous, and I wanted to laugh at what had happened in the previous three days. I was still unaccustomed to the atmosphere of Revolution. I tried to imagine a committee of common soldiers and workmen setting themselves up in London and declaring that they were the Government, and that no order from Whitehall was to be obeyed unless it was countersigned by them. I tried to imagine the British Cabinet entering into negotiations with the Committee for the settlement of the dispute, while Buckingham Palace was surrounded by troops and the Sovereign escaped from a side entrance disguised as a washerwoman. And yet something of this sort in Russian surroundings had actually happened. It was almost impossible to realize that the century-old Russian Empire was actually dissolving before one's eyes with such extraordinary lack of dignity.

I went down the Nevsky Prospect on the morning of the 9th. The middle-class press was being sold in the streets, as if nothing had happened. Its tone, however, was subdued. The Cadet *Retch* appeared too staggered by the shock to be able to do more than moan about the fate of Russia. At the Chief Telegraph Office I met a man who was connected with banking circles. He, too, was so stunned that he was finding relief by persuading himself that, although the Bolsheviks had temporarily succeeded, they could not possibly hold power for more than a few days. In the Petrograd Telegraph Agency, however, I found a more confident atmosphere. All the old officials were at work as if nothing had happened. I was shown telegrams received from what purported to be soldiers' committees at the front. They promised every assistance in the task of expelling the "traitors and usurpers." Couriers were

running backwards and forwards to the offices of the Cadet newspapers; leaflets and special anti-Bolshevik bulletins were being printed and distributed broadcast. It was clear that a part at least of the bureaucracy, with the intelligentsia at its head, were already mobilizing against those who had taken power.

Perhaps, after all, I thought to myself, the whole thing was a mad adventure. How could committees of workmen and soldiers, even if they had the passive consent of the war-weary and hungry masses, succeed against the whole of the technical apparatus of the bureaucracy and of the agents of foreign finance? Splendid as was this rebellion of the slaves, as showing that there still was hope and courage in the masses, it was surely doomed in the face of these tremendous odds. Russia could hardly escape the fate of Carthage. She would become the hewer of wood and drawer of water for the finance magnates of the modern Rome in Western Europe. And this view I found expressed even in quarters standing quite near to the Bolsheviks. In the Sadovaya Street I met an acquaintance who was working with Maxim Gorky on his newspaper, the *Novaya Zhizn*. "The Bolsheviks have made a great mistake in seizing power by these methods," he said; "they cannot possibly hold it unless the moderate democratic parties come to their aid." This view of a Russian progressive intellectual was very similar to those of outside observers at this time. "During the week end," I wrote in a despatch to the *Manchester Guardian* that evening, "it has been possible to observe that the right wing of the Bolsheviks are dissatisfied with the demagogic tactics of Lenin and Trotsky, who control the new Council of the People's Commissioners. The only solution giving any hope of success would be that the moderate peasant parties should send representatives into the Revolutionary Government, and thereby exercise a sobering influence. Within the ranks of the Bolsheviks are differences. The moderate wing is inclined to the formation of a Coalition Socialist Ministry. But Lenin and Trotsky seem intent on turning themselves into cheap editions of Robespierre."

On the following day, however (November 10th), there was a different feeling in the air. It seemed as if there was, for the first time for many months, a political force in the country that knew what it wanted. This view was clearly reflected in the common talk in the streets. Outside the Circus Modern a large crowd had assembled for a meeting, at which delegates from the Soviet Congress were going to speak. Groups of lower

middle-class citizens, the poorer type of student and small shopkeeper and all that urban element which in Russia goes under the name of *meshchaneen* were discussing the outlook. No word was said about the violent methods by which the Bolsheviks had come into power. The deeds which shocked the tender feelings of the intellectual did not trouble the realist politician of the street. Would they be able to bring food to the towns and make an end to the war? That was the question which was being asked. The Tsar's Government could not do it, nor could Kerensky's. "Give these people a chance," were the words I heard coming from all sides. The small shopkeeper class and a large part of the high-collared proletariat, which had been bitterly hostile to the Bolsheviks all through the summer, were apparently converted for the moment to an attitude of benevolent neutrality.

On the following day (10th) I walked over to the Vassily Ostroff and visited the quays, where the steamers came in from Kronstadt. At intervals along the embankment little patrols of Red Guards, and workmen from the factories, led by sailors with red bands round their arms, were standing round log fires. Crowds of inquisitive sightseers had come down to look at the light cruiser *Aurora* and the destroyers which were flying the red flag, and riding at anchor in the Neva. The sailors of Kronstadt and the Red Guards had made the Baltic Fleet the fortress of the Revolution. Since they had now come out as the strong arm of the new Government, the Petrograd *meshchaneen* was turning out to look at its novel rulers. For a long time I watched the groups of Red Guards and sailors being interviewed by those who until yesterday, thanks to the propaganda of the bourgeois press, used to look upon Bolsheviks as monsters, but who now seemed surprised to find that they were, after all, human beings.

Towards evening I went to the Smolny Institute. The Second All-Russian Soviet Congress was just at an end, and the delegates were departing to all parts of Russia. They were being loaded up with large packets of pamphlets, proclamations and appeals, which they were going to distribute in far-off regions, so that the Tartars on the steppes and the fur-hunters in Siberia should have news of the great adventure in Petrograd—the attempt to create the first workmen's Government in the world. Upstairs in the office of the official Soviet organ *Izvestia* I found the Bolsheviks already in possession. The Menshevik editor had packed up and was just leaving as I came in. The Bolshevik leader, Stekloff, was engaged in earnest

conversation with someone, whom I did not know. Axelrode was trying to put some sort of order into a pile of papers. Someone else was picking with a bradawl at the lock of a drawer, from which the keys had evidently been removed by the Mensheviks before they left. Along one side of the room Lenin was walking up and down, sunk in deep thought. I looked on this scene of untidy bustle and wondered; could it last? Was this really the intellectual nucleus of a new ruling power in the world, or was it only an amusing incident—a “fuss in the mud,” so to say?

“They have just issued a proclamation, calling on the people to recognize only them,” I heard the voice of Stekloff, indignantly proclaiming. “Has anyone seen it?” he added. I presumed that he referred to the leaflet issued by the ejected Menshevik Soviet leaders earlier in the day. I happened to have picked it up in the street, and went across the room to Stekloff and gave him a copy. He looked at me. I had spoken with him once earlier in the year, but he did not recognize me now. “That man is certainly a spy from the counter-revolution,” I seemed to hear him think. But he took the pamphlet and roared out to someone in the next room: “Come over here and write a leader on this leaflet.” A lean individual appeared, took it and began to scribble off an article. The first copy of the new Bolshevik official *Izvestia* was in process of coming to light.

I left the Smolny about eight o'clock, and walked past the Taurida Palace to the Sadovaya Street. Here I met the same friend from the *Novaya Zhizn* whom I had met on the previous day. “There are two political bodies in this city, and both are pretending to be the supreme authority,” he said. He advised me to go to the *gorodskaya uprava* (municipal council building). It was getting on for ten o'clock, but I went. Inside the municipal buildings I found the Menshevik and Socialist Revolutionary delegates of the defunct Soviet. Apparently, however, they did not in the least degree regard themselves as defunct, in spite of the fact that the Second Soviet Congress had left them in a minority of one to ten. The City Council, elected on the geographical franchise some six months before, had agreed to join hands with these Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries of the old Soviet. A joint Committee had been formed—the “Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom.” “We have every reason to believe that we shall have the Bolsheviks out of the Smolny in a couple of days,” said a prominent member of this Committee to me. I

had formerly known him as a leader-writer on the Socialist Revolutionary Party organ. "We have got the support of the foreign Embassies, who have decided to recognize us as the only authority in Petrograd," he added. It was clear that the Bolshevik Soviet at the Smolny was now up against the first serious organized resistance. A trial of strength was about to begin in Petrograd between the industrial councils of the organized workers and the institutions elected on the basis of the geographical area. The Bolsheviks had succeeded in capturing the former, which on account of their continuous re-election were always reflecting the different political currents running among the organized workers. The Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, however, controlled the latter, because their parties had been the most popular during the earlier part of the summer. They were exploiting, in fact, a passing mood of the Revolution four months earlier. Both sides were using institutions created by the Revolution to remain in power. The one was using the flexible industrial organs of the conscious proletariat, and the other the rigid, more cumbrous institutions of middle-class democracy. Which would prevail?

Round the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" the upper middle-class elements of the city were flocking. Journalists of the Cadet and capitalist press, army officers, advocates and students of the technical institutes were going to and fro. Much printed matter was being sent out. I saw one deputation from the Cossacks at the front. Some sort of military action was clearly being planned. The air was full of rumours. Towards midnight I returned to my rooms.

Early next morning (the 11th) I was awakened by sounds of rifle-firing. I dressed and went out on to the embankment of the Fontanka Canal. Hardly had I gone outside the gateway when the nerve-racking clatter of a machine-gun at close quarters pierced the foggy air. The next minute the dull sound of bullets, embedding themselves in the stucco of the building outside which I was standing, showed me that it was healthier under cover than in the open. From the safety of the door-keeper's lodge I then surveyed the scene of battle. It had begun indeed—the trial of strength between the Smolny Soviets and the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom." In the big red building on the other side of the canal, the Military Academy, a force of Cadets and students had fortified themselves. Machine-gun fire was spirting out of several of the windows in the direction of the Nevsky Prospect. It was being answered by another machine-gun and sporadic

rifle-fire from Sadovaya Street, and some of the bullets were striking the house where I lived. The besiegers were apparently not strong, and presently their firing ceased altogether. In the pause I emerged from my cover and with gingerly steps crept down the side of the Fontanka Canal towards a bridge, which I crossed. When I was opposite the Circus Modern a violent fusillade broke out again from the windows of the Military Academy. Rifle bullets whistled overhead, and suddenly everyone vanished from the streets. I got into a side entrance of a house along with a number of other people and waited. Everyone was silent and depressed and trying to hide his inner feelings beneath an outward calm. I kept on wondering if the next fusillade would cause a bullet to ricochet from the adjoining building into our midst. Here indeed was the front, not the national but the class front, and the remarkable thing about it was that there was no sharp line of division between the opposing forces. Among the people where I was standing were persons of the middle class, and beside them a workman and two soldier deserters from the now fast-melting Tsarist army. "Why are you hiding?" said a well-dressed man to one of the soldiers. "You have been at the war, and ought not to be afraid of bullets."

"Had two years of it against the Germans and wounded twice," said the soldier; "think I have had enough."

"Why don't you go and help these Cadets against the red ruffians? or are you one of our brave deserters who have sold Russia to these Bolsheviki and to the Germans?" asked the well-dressed man.

"Give me a rifle, and I will go and fight against those Cadets," replied the soldier.

"And I will see to it that you don't get a rifle," said the well-dressed citizen, as though he was sorry he had raised the subject. Apparently he and his class in Petrograd that day were, on reflection, as anxious to take arms away from the common people as they had been to force arms into their hands three years before, when the war with Germany began.

During an interval of quiet I crept out. Soldiers with red cockades on their hats and Kronstadt sailors had brought up a field-gun. Detachments of Red Guards were arriving. A motor-car from the Smolny came along. Someone in a leather overcoat, apparently from the Military Revolutionary Committee, called to one of the soldiers:

"What detachment is this?"

"We are from the Putiloff works," said a young man in

civilian clothes with a rifle on his shoulder and a red band on his arm.

"Who is your officer?" asked the Commissar.

"There is none; we are all officers," said the Red Guard. "Smolny summoned us by telephone from the works at eight o'clock this morning; we found no one here to give us any orders, so we took up these positions."

Boom! went the field-gun and a couple of seconds later a three-inch shell crashed into the red walls of the Military Academy. I was standing not far from the Circus, which protected me from the window in the Academy whence the Cadets were pouring out their worst machine-gun fire. How could that machine-gun be silenced? It swept three streets and made approach from three sides impossible. Another one was posted at the north entrance. The Red Guards were evidently not anxious to wreck the great building with artillery fire. And yet to storm it would mean heavy loss. Already a dozen wounded Red Guards were lying groaning on the ground at the entrance to the Circus. There was no first aid, although the Smolny had been urgently telephoned. But the Red Cross was working for the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and Freedom," and the staff of the private and municipal hospitals were sabotaging. The soldiers belonging to a regiment supposed to be sympathetic to Smolny were said to be wavering. They had taken up positions on the Mars Field north of the Academy. Having lost eight men, and seeing no chances of silencing those machine-guns, they were losing heart. About three o'clock I saw a large detachment of sailors march up from the direction of the Neva. Their arrival was the signal for much bustling, cursing, and even kicking. The wavering soldiers on the Mars Field were told to prepare for attack or clear off home, if they did not want to face a revolutionary tribunal. Two more field-guns were brought up. I was summarily expelled from the point of vantage and of safety I had secured under the wall of a small public garden by the canal. There was nothing for me to do but to bolt back to my rooms on the other side of the Fontanka. I set out, but as I got to the bridge—boom! went the sailors' field-gun, and a terrific clatter of machine-gun fire came from the Academy. Bullets made the air hideous, and looking back I saw a storming party of Red Guards advancing across the garden, where I had just been, in the direction of the Academy. After dodging the bullets by hiding in areas and side entrances, when the fusillades commenced, I reached my rooms at last. Shortly after this all was quiet. The sailors had done their work. The Cadets capitulated, and

were marched off to the fortress of Peter and Paul, but not before a number of them were selected from the rest and done to death with the butt-ends of rifles. Thus ended the ill-starred Cadet rising of November 11th. Smolny and the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" had had their trial of strength, and Smolny had won. The sailors of the Baltic Fleet and the Petrograd factory workers had been able to summon enough material force and technical equipment to their aid to overcome the officers and students corps which the Petrograd middle classes had hastily mobilized against them. The Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries, whom I had seen the night before working with the old municipal council, had shot their bolt and failed. The industrial councils of the organized workmen had proved that they had material resources at their back and—more important than all—the will to conquer. From that moment they were the undisputed masters of Petrograd. Waverers and doubting Thomases from the petty bourgeoisie rallied to them again. The big bourgeoisie and those with the money-bags resorted now to the provinces and sought to mobilize the country-side, the "loyal elements of the front," and the Cossacks against the "Red bandits of the capital."

Already on the following day (November 12th) it was evident that this new danger was threatening the Smolny Soviets. The Bolshevik *Izvestia* came out with big headlines:—"The counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie is raising its head. The revolutionary proletariat must know how to answer." By decree of the Petrograd Soviet, all papers, including the middle-class ones, were compelled to print this "announcement." One of them had either an editor or a compositor with a sense of humour, for someone managed to make a "mistake" in the printing. The headlines therefore ran: "The counter-revolutionary proletariat is raising its head, but the revolutionary bourgeoisie will know how to answer!" Kerensky, at the head of Cossacks and troops, said to be loyal to him, was marching on Petrograd. The force was rumoured to number 20,000 and had already reached Tsarskoye Selo. It was clear that this was the outside force with which the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" had been in touch from the first. The Cadet rebellion was planned to break out at the moment when Kerensky was nearing Petrograd. It broke out, however, too soon. Nevertheless, the Committee had hopes that Kerensky alone could take Petrograd. An enthusiastic member of the Cadet Party, whom I met in the morning, assured me quite positively that

Kerensky would be in the city by evening. I went across the Neva to the "Finland side" of the city to look up a friend in one of the metal works there. He was not in the shops, which had been closed. All hands were called on to volunteer for the front against Kerensky. A big meeting was just ending in the yards. A motor transport had come with rifles, which were being distributed to the men. In the crowd I met my friend. Like all the rest, he was dressed in his "civies," but bore a red badge on his fur cap. The motor transport, he said, had just come from Syster-Reka, a small town on the Finnish frontier, where there were munition works. The Military Revolutionary Committee had made this the central depot for the distribution of arms to the Petrograd workmen. Motors were passing to and fro between this place and the Petrograd factories. Food was being given out too. My friend had a large loaf of bread and a sausage. It was all he was to get for two days. There was no commissariat for supplying the Red Guards with food, he said.

"But what if you don't beat Kerensky in two days?" I asked. "You will starve up there."

"If we don't beat him to-morrow, we shall hang in any case," came the grim reply. "Kerensky has got the Cossack General Krasnoff with him."

Then the workmen marched out of the factory yards, singing the *International*, and disappeared in the mist of the winter's day.

The streets on the Vassily Ostroff and on the south side of the Neva were full of armed detachments of Red Guards from the factories, marching in the direction of the Tsarkoye Selsky railway station. On passing through the Nevsky Prospect and Sadovaya Street the well-dressed middle-class passers-by would spit and curse under their breath. They were clearly expecting that, in spite of the failure of the Cadet rising on the previous day, this new invasion of Cossacks from the front would bring them deliverance. But the streams of Red Guards pouring out of the factories to the new front completely knocked them off their balance. "If only the Germans would come and exterminate these vermin!" I heard one of them say. It was clearly a Red Guard show. The regular soldiers of the garrison, the Preobrashensky, Vollhinsky and the Semeonoff regiments were for the most part remaining in their barracks. They were interested only in one thing—how to get to their villages in the far-off parts of the great Russian plain. As usual, the industrial proletariat, the workers of the factories, were bearing the burden and making the sacrifice for the Revolution. The peasant soldiers were only helping the Revolution by their benevolent neutrality

and by getting in the way as little as possible. In the Smolny I found revolutionary chaos reigning. My pass given by the Mensheviks no longer sufficed to let me in, and no one could be found to give me a new one. Moreover, the *Manchester Guardian* was regarded as a bourgeois organ, and therefore I was assumed to be a counter-revolutionary and in the pay of Kerensky. But fortunately I met my friend from the *Novaya Zhizn* who guaranteed that I had not come to assassinate the members of the Military Revolutionary Committee, and I was allowed in. During the whole of that evening reports arrived from the front. Kerensky had advanced almost to Pulkovo—so we heard about five o'clock. Krasnoff's Cossacks, however, were believed to be wavering and not wanting to fight. Plenty of propaganda literature was wanted on this section of the front. A special leaflet offensive should be undertaken! An aeroplane attack with revolutionary pamphlet bombs was to be made! The hastily organized press department of the *Izvestia* got busy, and in half an hour a couple of transport autos rolled off to the front with the required spiritual ammunition.

It was already clear to me that the Bolshevik Military Revolutionary Committee was not in control of an army in the ordinary sense of the word. The Red Guard detachments were very largely independent of one another, electing their own commanders, and removing them whenever the rank and file saw fit. The following scene in the corridor of the Smolny during these hours will suffice to show what I mean. Said a member of the Military Revolutionary Committee, formerly a leader-writer in one of the Bolshevik organs, to a Red Guard: "You must bring your men to the Committee's headquarters at Pulkovo and await instructions."

"But the men refuse to go, till they have had a night's rest, and then they want to go in the Krasnoye Selo direction, because there is another detachment from the same factory there," said the Red Guard. "They have threatened to elect another commander if these wishes are not fulfilled," he added.

"But, comrade," said the member of the Committee, "do understand that the safety of the Revolution is at stake. You really must persuade your men that it is imperative to beat Kerensky away from Petrograd. Please go and tell them that the Committee will regard it as endangering the Revolution if the Pulkovo front is not at once strengthened."

The Red Guard promised and went off to his men. This was the sort of military force which Lenin had to guide and direct in these days. The chaos of the Kerensky period and the

dissolution of the capitalist system in Russia had forced the workers to create their own organs—the industrial councils. Threatened with danger, these councils were forming improvised military units without cohesion or adequate directive centres. Hunger and hatred of wage slavery alone bound them together with a band of iron. There was no disciplined Red Army.

On the following day (November 13th) Smolny announced triumphantly that Kerensky had retreated in disorder from Pulkovo. The Red Guard commanders had evidently persuaded their men to go to their appointed places to defend the Revolution. The leaflet offensive had clearly had effect upon the Cossacks, who, according to communications, were now fraternizing with the Red Guards and asking for transport to enable them to get home to the "quiet Don." Kerensky was a fugitive, Krasnoff a prisoner, to be set free on parole, for the workers were good-hearted, even to the hirelings of their class enemies.¹ The Petrograd workers had now shown themselves capable through their industrial organizations of repelling hirelings mobilized from the country-side and from the front. For it turned out that the Cossacks were too much interested in their own agrarian problems to care about revolutions in Petrograd. The soldiers on the northern front, moreover, were as revolutionary as the Petrograd garrison; indeed, even more so, because they had suffered the most from cold and hunger. So all that Kerensky could do was to get together a few officers and Socialist Revolutionary delegates of the Right—those who had been elected six months before, and had been careful to avoid re-election since. These had moved heaven and earth to get their rank and file to march on Petrograd, but they had failed. An interesting picture of the state of affairs in the anti-Bolshevik ranks at this time was given in an article in a Russian immigrant journal in Berlin,² by Stankevitch, who was one of the men with Kerensky at this time. It is all the more interesting as coming from an anti-Bolshevik source, and it explains some of the causes of the Bolshevik successes in the following passages:

"Why did Krasnoff's force retire? Technically at least there were two causes: The absence of infantry and the insufficiency of ammunition. But both these causes are subordinate to another: the psychology of the masses. There was quite sufficient infantry, even more than was wanted in Tsarskoye Selo and at Gatchina. But the garrisons at these places, while

¹ Six months later Krasnoff joined the Germans and set up a hostile government on the Don to fight the Bolsheviks.

² *Zhizn*, May 15, 1920.

they did not go over to the Bolsheviks, refused to go over to the side of the Government (Kerensky's). The supporters of the Bolsheviks went off hurriedly to Petrograd with their arms. The rest threw down their arms, offering no resistance to the newcomers. Not more than a hundred soldiers from these infantry garrisons could be got together for the help of Krasnoff. The soldiers patiently listened to all arguments presented to them, but went away without expressing any opinion and taking no sides. . . . Somewhat the same atmosphere prevailed even among the Cossacks. It is true they advanced to attack the Bolsheviks, but they did not really fight, since the Bolshevik losses after a whole day's fighting were ridiculously small. The Bolsheviks were more numerous than their enemies and they were more united. And the indifferent men gradually inclined to their side. Therefore Krasnoff's small detachment was compelled to retire, in order to prevent being dissolved in a mass of passive, wavering soldiers surrounding it. . . . Kerensky decided to call a Council. Krasnoff, Savinkoff, the Chief of Staff and the Commander of the Cossack division, were present. Disputes at once arose. Savinkoff insisted on the continuation of the struggle at all costs, and agreed only to an armistice to gain time. He also hoped for the help of the Polish divisions under Dovbor-Musnitsky. I held the opposite view, showing that continuation of the struggle would bring about complete collapse of the front. Krasnoff was little interested in wide political perspectives. He needed an armistice at all costs to save his Cossack division. Kerensky bowed to the inevitable and appeared to agree with me. . . . Thus in the decisive moment events appeared to be due to a chain of small and unfortunate coincidences. It seemed that, if this or that action had not taken place, events would have developed otherwise. But now it is clear that the question was much more complicated. How came it about that Kishkin and Palchinsky at Petrograd, Kerensky and Krasnoff in Pskoff, Dukhonin and Diderichs at the General Staff, were all suddenly helpless? This could surely not be due to a series of accidents or to individual mistakes."

But what was happening outside Petrograd over the length and breadth of the vast Russian plain? During the next three days news began to trickle through to me. On the evening of the 15th I met an army doctor, who had just come up from the south-west front. He had passed Moscow on the night of the 14th by the loop line around the city. Heavy artillery firing could be heard and gun-flashes seen in the direction of the Kremlin. The Cadet and Officers Corps, under the direction of the Right

Socialist Revolutionaries, had entrenched themselves in the Kremlin with plenty of ammunition and supplies. The Moscow Soviet, which had had for some weeks now a Left majority, sent an ultimatum demanding the disarming of the Cadets. This was refused. The Soviet therefore directed military operations from the old Government house on the Skobelev Square against the Kremlin. As in Petrograd, only a part of the garrison were ready to sustain a heavy sacrifice in defence of the Revolution. The rest wavered and wanted to go home to their villages. But there were no sailors' detachments as in Petrograd to stiffen the revolutionary ranks. The bulk of the work fell on rather inexperienced factory workmen and on the irregular partisan bands, hastily organized by the new Left S.R. (Socialist Revolutionary) Party and the Anarchists. The lack of co-ordination of effort was even more felt here than in Petrograd, and it was not till November 16th that we heard that the Cadets and Officers Corps had capitulated to the Moscow Soviet and that the red flag waved on the Bell Tower of Ivan.

In most of the towns of Central Russia the local workers' and soldiers' Soviets waited till they received the news that Petrograd was definitely in the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee before they removed Kerensky's agents and assumed authority openly. In some places, however, the local Soviets anticipated Petrograd. This was particularly the case in Kazan and in the Central Asia cities, where the garrison and Red Guards were already in power on November 5th. From all the reports that I received, it was clear that the action of the revolutionaries in Petrograd was only a reflection of what was going on in the rest of Russia in different forms and under different conditions. The Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd had not in any way made the November Revolution. The Revolution had arisen out of the need for some sort of order and discipline in the country, which was threatening to dissolve in chaos and anarchy.

Watching events in Petrograd at this time, one got the impression that Russia was rather like Central Asia in the Middle Ages as described by Marco Polo in his travels—each town and province being a law unto itself. In the northern and north-western provinces the Soviets had been captured by the workmen and the half-proletarian elements and "middle peasants" of the villages, while the whole army front from the Estonian coast down to Mogiliev was in the hands of soldiers' Soviets, which had long ceased to obey the Menshevik Committees, elected in the summer. It was clear that the Council of the

People Commissars in Petrograd could count on active support from these regions, for the bulk of the population here was cold, hungry and very war-weary. Proof of this was not difficult to obtain. While Kerensky was marching on Petrograd, the Bolshevik Committee of the 5th Army got a whole division on its side and prepared to move to the assistance of the "Red Capital." In the 12th Army conflicts had already begun between the rank and file and the old Menshevik Committees. Railways had been torn up along the route by which help was to have been sent to Kerensky. From Mogilieff down to the Black Sea coast, however, conditions were different. The soldiers on this south-west front were only war-weary and did not feel the pangs of hunger. But they, too, were beginning to kick over the traces and were refusing to obey the Executive of their old soldiers' Soviets, which went under the name of "South-West Front Committee" and the *Rumcherod*.¹ Both these bodies were controlled by the Mensheviks and the Right S.R.'s, who refused to abandon the idea of coalition with the middle-class parties, who would not give any definite undertaking about securing peace by the first snow-fall, or about the land settlement, and who would not allow fresh elections of the Soviets to take place. But the soldiers from the south-west front, instead of electing committees which declared their support of the Bolsheviks, as in the north, went over for the most part to the National movement, which was growing in the towns and villages of the Ukraine. This was largely explained by the fact that in the Ukraine the industrial proletariat formed a very small section of the population. On the other hand, there was a big, well-to-do peasant proprietor class, particularly in the regions east of the Dniester, and the initiative in political movements had been very largely left to them and to the intellectuals of the provincial towns. Moreover, in the Ukraine the great landed proprietors, the owners of the sugar factories, and the higher grades of the bureaucracy, were all either Poles or Great Russians from the northern provinces. This gave the popular movement a certain national tinge, which enabled the intellectuals to exploit the class antagonisms of these regions in the interest of their petty bourgeois local movement. The revolutionary energy thus assumed here a national character, and its organ became the Ukrainian Rada, or Council.

The Rada consisted of the following parties: On the right wing were the Socialist "Samostinchiky," who found their support in the rich farmer and proprietor class. Their interests were

¹ This was the Russian abbreviation for "Rumanian front, Black Sea fleet, and Odessa garrison."

to restrict immigration of land-hungry peasants from North Russia and to keep their *batraki*, or agricultural wage-labourers (also from the north), from becoming independent. Hence they were strongly nationalist and stood for the complete independence of the Ukraine. They formed the backbone of the *haidamaki* or Ukrainian Nationalist troops. In social policy they were conservative, although they called themselves socialists. But in the Ukraine all Nationalist parties called themselves socialists because most of the landlords and big bourgeoisie were not native Ukrainians. All elements, therefore, who were in social conflict with the latter called themselves Ukrainian National Socialists, although they were perhaps firm believers in private property and bitter opponents of food control or any form of communal activity.

Another party in the Rada was the "Socialist Federalist." It found its chief support in the small parvenu middle-class element of the Ukrainian provincial towns. This element had become rich by speculation during the war, and, being economically bound to the Great Russian bourgeoisie, it opposed the separatism of the *Samostinchiky*. On the other hand, it feared being swallowed up by the big trusts of foreign finance, to whose chariots the Great Russian bourgeoisie was bound; for, like all petty bourgeois elements, it was aspiring to become big. Therefore it tried to compromise with the idea of a federal Russia with autonomous rights for the Ukraine. The *Samostinchiky* and the Federalists thus formed the right wing of the Rada.

In the centre of the Rada came the largest party, the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries (S.R.'s), who found their chief support at this period of the Revolution among the Ukrainian "middle peasantry." In the Ukraine, however, these elements were for the most part small peasant proprietors, and not members of rural communes as in North Russia. The Ukrainian S.R.'s were in general opportunist. They followed the lead, now of the rich farmer class, now of more progressive elements. On the left wing of the Rada came the "Ukrainian Social Democrats," a small but progressive group. They were supported mostly by the intellectuals of the Ukrainian towns and by the members of the co-operative societies in the villages. They contained a left and a right wing, but at this period of the Russian Revolution these wings held together on a common platform, which included the policy of a Federal Russia, with an autonomous Ukraine, liquidation of the landlord's estates and peace on the basis of the Petrograd Soviet's programme of April 1917. In theory the Ukrainian Social Democrats and Ukrainian S.R.'s differed little

from the Mensheviks and S.R.'s of Great Russia. But in tactics they differed considerably, owing to the circumstances in which they worked. In Great Russia there was no national barrier between the petty bourgeoisie and the big bourgeoisie, and this facilitated, during the summer of 1917, the creation of the fatal coalition between the Cadets, the Mensheviks and the S.R.'s. The petty bourgeois elements, which controlled the North Russian Soviets at this time, were thus dragged along at the heels of the big bourgeoisie. In the Ukraine, however, the petty bourgeoisie was from the first in opposition to the big bourgeoisie, which was of another nationality, and hence the local nationalism of the middle social layer in this part of Russia effectively prevented a coalition of the Great Russian type. This facilitated during the Kerensky period a certain co-operation between the parties of the Rada and the Bolsheviks of Great Russia. But this co-operation lasted only as long as the Kerensky coalition remained in power. As soon as it fell, the whole political orientation of parties in the Ukraine changed.

On November 7th, when news arrived in Kieff that the Military Revolutionary Committee had control of Petrograd, the garrison, which was mainly Bolshevik, and the Rada seized power together and removed the agents of Kerensky. But within twelve hours the Rada and the garrison came to blows, the former speedily getting the upper hand and disarming the Bolshevik soldiers. By the second week in November the whole of the Western Ukraine was controlled by the peasants' parties and by the national intellectual groups, acting through the Rada in Kieff. In the East Ukraine, however, the situation was complicated by other factors. The urban proletariat and the *batraki* here formed no inconsiderable element of the population, and moreover the greater part of them were not Ukrainians at all, but Great Russians, who had migrated from the north. This was particularly the case with the transport workers of Odessa and with the miners of the Ekaterinoslav coalfields. Early in October there had been formed in Odessa a body called the "Revolutionary Committee of the Kherson." It was elected from the industrial councils of the transport workers of this part of the Black Sea coast, by the miners and metal workers of the region to the north, and by a few village *batrak* Soviets. The members belonged mostly to the left wing of the Mensheviks, the "Internationalists," as they were called. Their attitude was similar to that of the right wing of the Great Russian Bolsheviks, which feared Lenin's tactics. They wanted to see the Soviets controlled by a coalition of all socialist parties, from the Right S.R.'s down

to the Bolsheviks inclusive, in order to enable the period of proletarian dictatorship to pass off with a minimum of terror and with the consent of the more well-to-do elements of the peasantry. The Kherson Committee succeeded in holding its own for some weeks in Odessa, and was beginning to form an apparatus of government, when it was suddenly threatened by the Rada. The latter, having established itself in the Western Ukraine, claimed now the eastern part. Relying on the rich Ukrainian farmer class in the provinces of Ekaterinoslav, Tauris and Kherson, the Rada proceeded to arm and mobilize the *haidamaki* and marched on Odessa. The Bolshevik garrison, consisting mostly of Great Russian peasants, had by this time deserted and gone to their homes. The transport and metal workers of Odessa, Nicolaeff and Kherson hastily formed into Red Guards to defend the Kherson Committee and its moderate policy, but were defeated in a bloody fight in the streets of Odessa in the second week of November. Thus the Rada became mistress of all Ukraine.

To the east of the Ukraine lay the Don Cossacks' lands. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the Military Councils of the Cossacks in Petrograd transferred their activities to the Don and took up their headquarters at Novo-Tcherkask, as soon as it was clear that things were getting too warm for them in the "Red Capital." From here their leaders and commanders planned the establishment of the so-called "South Eastern Alliance." The idea behind this alliance was to unite for political and military purposes the agricultural population of the black earth territories of the south-east against northern Bolshevism. The Cossacks were the dominating element in it, for, as I have shown elsewhere, they formed a privileged agrarian caste under the control of an officer corps. As in the Ukraine, however, there was on the Don a large Great Russian element, which had migrated from the north, and which consisted of workers in the coalmines, of *batraki* and of peasants with very small land allotments. These elements kept aloof from the Alliance, and as soon as the news of the Revolution in Petrograd came, they attempted through local Soviets to take over control of their respective regions. Cossack wage-labourers from the mining districts also joined in, and thus there were on the Don two movements: one led by the Cossack officer caste against the non-Cossacks, and another movement within the Cossacks themselves. The alliance became the expression of the large Cossack landholders, and the Soviets the expression of the Great Russian proletarian element and the landless Cossacks. But the former had the arms

and the military organization, and so the Soviets did not at this period of the Revolution come into power here. In the Kuban and Terek territories of the North Caucasus the Cossacks, who possessed even larger land-holdings than their comrades on the Don, created a local Council, or Rada, and joined the Alliance. The Kuban Rada then attempted to bring in the tribal chiefs of the Caucasus mountain regions, but the suspicion of the tribesmen, who feared and hated the Cossacks for their stolen land, prevented the chiefs from joining the Alliance.

In the Trans-Caucasus the old Tsarist army on the Russo-Turkish front was by November in the control of soldiers' Soviets, following the paroles of a united Socialist Revolutionary Party (the split in the party had not yet taken place). In the provinces of Tiflis, Batum, Kutais, Erivan, Elizabetopol and Baku, the middle-class intelligentsia had formed national councils as in the Ukraine, and were in process of creating the Trans-Caucasian Republic. In the lower Volga provinces the land-hungry *batraki*, the "middle peasantry" and the rich farmers all joined together to secure the advantages already gained by the agrarian revolution of the summer. Their Soviets gave lip-service to the Bolsheviks and promised to co-operate with the Smolny. In the narrow strip of black earth territory stretching from the Black Sea to Central Siberia, the Orenburg, Uralsk and Akmolinsk Cossacks, whose land-holdings were very large, formed, under their officer caste, independent councils for the purpose of resisting the decrees of the Soviet regime and of holding down those elements which sympathized with Petrograd. Over a large part of Siberia the provincial "Duma," elected on a geographical franchise, and representing in the main the well-to-do colonist and settler, became the authority. In political colour the Duma was Socialist Revolutionary, comprising both wings of the old party, and aimed, like the Kherson Committee, at a united revolutionary front with the Bolsheviks. In Turkestan and in the oases of Russian Central Asia the Russian soldiers of the garrisons seized power a few hours before their comrades in Petrograd. The Tashkent, Kokand and Samarkand Soviets with Bolshevik majorities took over full control, removed the agents of Kerensky and the corrupt officials of the Tsar's Government, which had remained there ever since March. They received the passive consent and in some quarters the active support of the native Moslem population. This was the picture of Russia in the first days of the new regime.

CHAPTER XI

SABOTAGE OF THE INTELLECTUALS AND THE STRUGGLE IN THE PEASANT CONGRESS

THUS the vast regions of the former Russian Empire entered a phase of acute class struggle. In each region the population organized itself into groups, corresponding roughly with the economic and social interests of the different classes. In some places the lower middle classes, relying on the peasant proprietors, got the upper hand and started a local separatist movement. In others the Great Russian bourgeoisie, relying on a privileged agrarian element and a local military caste, came into power. In others the factory hands and the landless peasantry established their authority by means of Soviets. In each area that class prevailed which had the best organization and the best basis to work on, and which understood how to secure the assistance or neutrality of wavering elements.

At the beginning of the third week of November proletarian councils elected industrially had won to supreme political power in the towns of North and Central Russia. The question now was, whether they could set up an apparatus which would enable them to continue in power. Could they secure the services of the brain-workers? The Cadet press in Petrograd began now to publish appeals to all State servants, and to the technical staffs of factories and railways, calling upon them to refuse to obey the decrees and orders of the new regime. The private banks had, before the occupation of the State Bank by the Red Guards, succeeded in getting many millions of rouble notes into their possession. These were promptly placed at the disposal of the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom," and were given out in one month's advance wages to all State servants who would agree to strike and boycott the Soviet regime. On November 14th I went round to the Foreign Office and found only one hall porter there, and he said he had come because he was curious to see "Bronstein" (Trotsky). In the Ministry of Finance there was only one de-

partment open, and that was for the purpose of financing the "saboteurs." The Council of the People's Commissars had meanwhile sent Ossinsky to the State Bank to secure some rouble notes to enable the Smolny to carry on. The latter found only half a dozen bank clerks there, and they had not got the keys of any of the safes. After much difficulty, one of the higher officials was found, who by cajolery was persuaded to give up certain keys and open the way to the safes. But it was clear that the workmen's and soldiers' Soviets in the Smolny would not be able to carry on unless they could get a better grip upon the technical apparatus of the public services.

It was not surprising, therefore, that on November 15th rumours began to go about that the Bolsheviks were wavering. Maxim Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn* was insistent on the necessity for compromise. A Bolshevik right wing was active under the leadership of Lunacharsky, Zinovieff and Ryazanoff—the same group that tried to hold Lenin back on the eve of the *coup d'état*. They were seeking the support of the Mensheviks, of the S.R.'s and of the "intellectual socialist" groups, hoping to induce them to co-operate with the Smolny. The initiative was taken by the *Vikjel*, the name given to the Central Committee of the Railwaymen's Union, which had been elected some months before and was under the influence of the "Menshevik Internationalists." A conference was to be held to examine ways and means of inducing moderate elements to join the Soviet regime, or at least to secure the end of the "intellectuals' strike." But Lenin remained, as before, adamant. He did not attempt to hinder the proposed conference, and with the cunning of a Muscovite Tsar, he gave the "compromisers" a free hand to negotiate on condition that they protracted the negotiations! For he was as openly contemptuous of all attempts to come to an arrangement with the "socialist waverers," as he had been of similar attempts to work with the "socialist patriots" back in the summer. He was out to hack his way through and to smash the sabotage of the intellectuals, as he had smashed the rebellion of the Officers' Cadet Corps on the previous Saturday. Lenin's supporters seemed to be few. Trotsky remained through all this period silent. The Left S.R.'s held aloof also. A crisis had come, and it seemed to threaten the very existence of the Smolny. My own impression of the situation at this time can be seen in a telegram I sent to the *Manchester Guardian*, which contained the following passage: "Though supported by the labouring masses, the Bolsheviks now find themselves isolated from the right wing of the Socialist

movement, representing small bourgeois and intellectual elements and controlling the machinery of government. The latter fear that the fruits of armed rebellion will be terror, which will involve the closing of bourgeois newspapers and wholesale arrests." In another despatch I reflect a general pessimism prevailing at this time, for I wrote: "If the Lenin point of view prevails, it is difficult to see how Socialism can be realized, for all chance of a normal development will be swept away, and the country will become the arena of a great class struggle. Nevertheless, the peasant parties will have a moderating influence, and they have not yet said their last word."

Lenin, in fact, seemed to be pretty well isolated. But, as has so frequently happened in the course of the Russian Revolution, the penetrating foresight of this great man pointed the way along which the Revolution would go through the fog which obscured the vision of other smaller men around him. Lenin was openly contemptuous of the power of the Cadet and Right Socialist Revolutionaries to organize a peasant sabotage of the northern industrial centres, and, as the proceedings of the Second All-Russian Peasants' Conference, which met in Petrograd at this time, showed, his estimate was not far from the truth. This peasant conference became at once a storm centre. The Lenin group in the Bolshevik Party hoped to capture it, and to secure its support for the Council of the People's Commissars. The Mensheviks and S.R.'s, on the other hand, after the defeat of the Cadet rising and of the Kerensky advance, hoped to use the apparatus of this All-Russian Peasant Soviet to spread the influence of the "intellectual saboteurs" of Petrograd throughout the provinces. This new peasants' conference had been called together by the old Executive of the All-Russian Soviets a few days after the Bolshevik *coup* in Petrograd, with a view to securing its support for the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom." The Right S.R.'s dominated the old Executive, and although the latter had been against the idea of summoning another conference on the ground that all power should now go to the Constituent Assembly, which was shortly to be elected, it reconsidered its attitude as soon as it was clear that the Bolsheviks had established themselves in the principal industrial centres of the north. This Second Peasants' Congress, however, was a very imperfect reflection of the revolutionary situation in the Russian country-side. Vast districts in the south and east never received the instructions of the Executive to elect delegates. In many other districts the peasant communes were split up into contending factions, some under the

influence of the rich "kulaks" and others under the influence of the landless peasants. In many districts the communes and provincial peasants' Soviets had broken up, and formed two separate organizations, one supporting the Right S.R.'s and others the Left S.R.'s and the Bolsheviks. Many delegates did not know to which town to come after their election. For several days a large number of them were wandering about Moscow, thinking the conference was to be held there.

On November 19th, however, sufficient delegates had arrived in Petrograd to make a quorum. That evening the hall of the former Military Academy was filled. The representatives from the peasant communes of the northern provinces were for the most part young men, adhering to the Left S.R. Party. Those with whom I spoke emphasized the fact that the peasants of their districts were ready to fall in with any Government that would bring the war to an end, and would definitely guarantee them in possession of the landlords' latifundia. The intellectuals of the Right S.R.'s, therefore, could expect no support from them. On the other hand, the peasant delegates from a part of the central provinces and from the eastern territories were mostly middle-aged men, who had in many cases been sent by the old local executives, elected from the First All-Russian Peasants' Conference in the previous May. Their views were that no co-operation was possible with the Bolsheviks, until the latter declared that they would only hold office till the Constituent Assembly was elected. The struggle between these two elements at the conference began as soon as the proceedings opened. The representatives of the northern communes put forward the demand for a re-election of the Central Executive, and for a scrutiny of the invitations and of the mandates of certain delegates from the southern and eastern provinces, who, they said, had been nominated by the old executives and had never been elected. After one of the stormiest three hours' debates which I have ever witnessed in Russia, the Left S.R. delegates of the northern provinces carried their resolutions. In the course of the debate they reduced one of the members of the old Central Executive to tears. Finally a new Executive was elected, with Marie Spiridonova, the heroine of the Left S.R.'s, as President.

News had meanwhile come that a new Government had been formed in opposition to the Council of the People's Commissars. Its seat was said to be in Mogilieff at the headquarters of General Dukhonin, the Commander-in-Chief of the old army. It was composed of Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s. Victor Tchernoff was at its head, and it was to carry on the Government until the

Constituent Assembly. There were already three Governments claiming power in South and East Russia, and other prospective ones in other parts. The chaos seemed to be ever increasing. As I went home that evening I remembered the words that the old peasant woman in the village on the banks of the Volga had spoken some weeks before to me: "The mills of God are grinding, my dear; sooner or later there will be flour."

The next day (November 20th) the Left S.R. delegates proposed to discuss the situation, which had arisen from the formation of a Government at Mogileff. Just as the excitement was at its highest, who should appear in the hall but Tchernoff himself! He asked leave to address the Conference. Marie Spiridonova, as President, put the question whether he should be allowed to speak. Several delegates proposed that leave should only be granted on condition that he explained, first, what had happened at Mogileff, and state whether he had taken part in creating a new Government. Spiridonova tried to reassure them that Comrade Tchernoff in the course of his speech would undoubtedly explain what had happened. "He is no comrade!" shouted the delegates; "he is betraying the Revolution." After great commotion, order was secured and Tchernoff allowed to speak.

"The Peasants' Congress has a great and difficult task before it," he began. "It has to decide whether it is to take part in the new Government of the Revolution and, if not, in what form of Government it can participate."

"Tell us about Mogileff," shouted the delegates; "what were you doing there?"

"I have been down on a journey to the front," replied Tchernoff, "in order to acquaint myself with the general state of feeling there, for after the recent revolution here I considered that Petrograd was not the only place where the fate of Russia would be decided. On my return here I was arrested at the railway station by a Commissar of the Smolny, although I carried on me a special mandate from the Central Committee of our party."

Shouts of indignation arose from the delegates on the right and renewed cries of: "What treachery were you up to in Mogileff? Answer us!" There was a long silence. Calmly Tchernoff drew up his stately figure. His long black hair and powerful eyebrows were silhouetted against the white wall behind the tribune. Before him was a sea of peasant faces, waiting spell-bound for his answer.

"Comrades," he cried, "who dares to accuse me of treason

to the Revolution? If anyone here can bring forward evidence for such a charge, let me be tried by the All-Russia Constituent Assembly. I place my fate in its hand."

"Tell us what you did *now*," roared the delegates from the Left, while those of the Right rallied round their beloved leader.

I was forcibly reminded, as I looked upon this scene, of Danton before the revolutionary tribunal. This was the signal for the break-up of the Congress. The delegates of the Right, who were in a minority of some 40 per cent. to the 60 per cent. of the Left, rose and left the hall. With them went Tchernoff. He did not face the music any more, but started a rump Congress of the right wing in the municipal buildings, where the remnant of the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" was still holding out. Thus ended Tchernoff's career as a leader of the revolutionary Russian peasantry. A man with good intentions, impulsive temperament, and a broad human sympathy, he had won a great name among the land-hungry peasants during the Kerensky period, when the creation of a revolutionary atmosphere was a greater talisman to power than the carrying out of a revolutionary programme. But his personality had lost much of its charm and his words much of their persuasiveness in these days, and the peasants of the northern and central provinces had clearly given their decision at this Second Peasants' Congress. He had not taken up a clear position towards the revolutionary workmen's and soldiers' Soviets and towards the Bolshevik Council of the People's Commissars at the Smolny. He had allowed members of his party to organize the revolt of the Cadets on November 11th, and had got himself entangled with people who were mobilizing the anti-Bolshevik elements of the old soldiers' Soviets at the front, under the auspices of officers of the old Tsar's army. He had been with Kerensky at Gatchina and with Dukhonin at Mogilieff. In this last affair he was probably a victim of his surroundings, but it was not forgiven him. Henceforth his only hope of regaining popularity was by capturing the apparatus and using the prestige of the Constituent Assembly.

The situation thus created forced the Left S.R.'s, who held the majority at the Peasants' Congress, to decide on a definite line of action. Up to now they had held back from sending their representatives into the Council of the People's Commissars, although the Bolsheviks, and even the uncompromising Lenin, had invited all parties who accepted the principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat to join the Soviet Government. Now,

however, the hopes of creating a united revolutionary Government, including all parties from the Right S.R.'s to the Bolsheviks, had been wrecked by the tactics of the followers of Tchernoff in Mogilieff and at the Peasants' Congress. The Left S.R.'s had either to join the Bolsheviks in the Soviet Government, or seek allies on the Right. They chose the former alternative. Thus there came into being a new coalition of parties, which marked the next stage of the development of the Russian Revolution. An alliance came into being between the Bolshevik workmen and soldiers of the towns and the proletarian and "middle peasant" elements of the northern and central provinces. Lenin's tactics had won. Sceptical as I and other observers were of the chances of the Bolsheviks holding out, without the intellectuals of the Right Socialist groups, we were bound now to admit that, when once the Left S.R.'s had entered the Government, the Bolsheviks had important allies in the villages throughout all Northern and Central Russia. Fortified thus, they would be able much more easily to withstand the sabotage of the intellectuals in the Government Departments, and finally to break it. The lesson of the week ending November 24th was, that Lenin had remained victorious on the field. By refusing to compromise at a moment when compromise could only have meant abdication, he had carried off the laurels of victory.

One important feature to be observed in this period of the Russian Revolution was the growing community of interest between the "big bourgeoisie," represented by the Cadets, and the "revolutionary" intellectuals, represented by the Right S.R.'s. During the summer these two had been at daggers drawn with one another, but the march of events was gradually drawing them together. The whole history of the Russian revolutionary movement is full of these curious regroupings of parties. In the very early days, when the movement was in its infancy, the initiative in the attack on Tsarism was taken by progressive leaders of the bourgeoisie, by members of the free professions and by intellectuals, who possessed some influence among the peasantry. But already, after the 1905-6 Revolution, the right wing of the bourgeoisie, the Octobrists, had left the ranks of the forces attacking Tsarism. The March Revolution of 1917 had put the Cadets into power and made them definitely from this moment onwards an anti-revolutionary party, because the Revolution for them had never meant anything more than the dictatorship of heavy industry, and finance-capital in the place of the incompetent Tsarist aristocracy. The

November Revolution brought about the transference of yet another revolutionary group into the camp of the counter-revolution. The bulk of the intellectuals and the upper layer of the peasants, who were under their influence, went definitely now into opposition against the revolutionary proletariat and soldiers of the towns and villages. Partly through direct material interest and partly through inability to come to any independent decisions on their own account, they went with the proletariat until the critical hour struck, and then deserted to the camp of its enemy. How often has history recorded similar cases of the treachery of the "progressive middle classes." The Protestant burghers in the German peasant war in the sixteenth century, the Girondists in the French Revolution, and the German "progressives" in 1848 played the same rôle as the Right Socialist Revolutionaries after the Russian November Revolution of 1917.

The institution, round which the counter-revolution now rallied, was the Constituent Assembly, and the war-cry was "Defence of popular liberties through democratic franchise." The democratic franchise on a geographic basis, which had once been the weapon accepted by all parties, from the bourgeoisie to the advanced proletarian leaders in the struggle against Tsarist feudalism, now became the means for confounding issues and bolstering up social privilege. And so the Right S.R.'s and the Cadet press began directly after the breakdown of their efforts in the Peasants' Congress to trumpet abroad the cry, "All power to the Constituent Assembly." The Bolshevik press approached the question of the rights of the Constituent Assembly very gingerly. The elections were to take place, they said. Indeed it was only because the Bolsheviks had overthrown the Kerensky regime, that it was possible for the elections to take place at all. The Cadets, they explained, had been sabotaging the elections all through the summer, because they knew they could not succeed at the polls. Now, however, since they had come to an understanding with the Right S.R.'s, they were in favour of the elections. What better proof that the Constituent Assembly was nothing else but an instrument of class dictatorship. But, said the Bolshevik press, the revolutionary workmen and soldiers will not prevent the elections. Indeed, they have everything to gain from them, for the Constituent Assembly, when it meets, will either join the Soviets, or only demonstrate its incapacity to lead the Revolution. "We are confronted," wrote the *Pravda* on November 24th, "with the question of the

relations of the Soviets to the Constituent Assembly, and we consider the former more truly represents the will of the proletariat than any other assembly, for if the Soviets lose the confidence of the electors, they are re-elected at once. The Soviets must stand on guard over the interest of the proletariat, and propose to the Constituent Assembly the permanent constitution of the Russian Republic, based on a federation of industrial councils of the workers, soldiers and peasants." The tactics of the Bolsheviks during the summer of 1917 and up to the November Revolution showed, firstly, that they recognized the value of democratic elections on a geographical basis, as a means of finding a platform for propaganda against the bourgeoisie at a time when the latter retained a certain hold over the masses; secondly, that they regarded these parliamentary platforms as valueless after the bourgeoisie had been removed from power by industrial councils of class-conscious workers.

The conditions under which the Constituent Assembly was elected on November 28th did much to strengthen the idea among the masses that the Bolshevik estimate of the value of Parliaments as an instrument for the social revolution was in the main correct. In Petrograd and in other industrial districts of the north, centre and west, the elections gave 42 per cent. of the seats to the Bolsheviks, 11 per cent. to the party of the big bourgeoisie (the Cadets), and 47 per cent. to the united S.R.'s, who received the block vote of the peasants. The elections thus did not bring about the distinction between the various elements among the peasantry, but simply forced the rich kulaks the "middle peasants" and the poor half-proletarians of the villages to plump for the party of the lower-middle classes, because there was no other peasant party list. In the black earth zone of the south-east and in the lower Volga provinces the Bolsheviks received 20 per cent. of the seats, the Cadets only 4 per cent., and the united S.R.'s 70 per cent. In the Ukraine, Urals and Siberia the Bolsheviks got on an average 11 per cent. of the seats, the Cadets 4 per cent., and the S.R.'s (both united and local National S.R.'s) got 75 per cent. The general result was thus clear. This election on the basis of the geographical constituency showed a united minority on the extreme right and on the extreme left. In the centre all was blurred. The ground was thus prepared for the dictatorship either of the Bolsheviks or of the Cadets. The Bolsheviks under these circumstances felt secure. They knew that, if they had only an average 25 per cent. of the votes of the whole country, and if those votes came from the most organized and conscious elements

in the proletariat, there was no hindrance to the rule of the Soviets.

The failure to get a clear picture in the "centre" was particularly noticeable in the provinces. In several districts of Tula, Kaluga, Pskoff, Viatka, Kazan, the Kherson, Ekaterinoslav and Tchernigoff the elections were little more than formal nominations by the polling officers of lists previously sent in. The Left S.R.'s, who had just entered into coalition with the Bolsheviks, were refused on technical grounds by the officials the right to send in their own lists. The name Socialist Revolutionary meant much to the peasants of these remote rural districts. It was synonymous for the revolutionary struggle against the autocracy, for the realization of the peasants' age-long claim for the liquidation of the agrarian estates. Only a "united" S.R. list, however, was allowed to appear. It was supposed to represent the party before it had split, but the representatives of the new Left party were with few exceptions excluded from running candidates at all. In the provincial towns the Cadets had an active propaganda apparatus and press. This was at once turned on to flood these remote villages, many of which had only the vaguest idea of what had happened in Petrograd, with leaflets, calling upon the peasants to vote for the "united" Socialist Revolutionary ticket, on the ground that it would bring the war to an end and give the landlords' latifundia to the peasants! The Cadets who had, back in the summer, hounded their new protégé Tchernoff from office, because he had dared to propose that the landlords must not be allowed to sell their estates till the decision of the Constituent Assembly, had now suddenly changed their tactics. The Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s had no means in the short time at their disposal to explain the new situation to these remote villages. The apparatus of the bourgeois state was only partly in their hands in the big towns, and was completely in the hands of their enemies in the provinces. The peasants of these districts voted for the lists recommended by the Cadet agents before the counter-propaganda could be set in motion. In doing so they thought they had voted for the party that would liquidate the war and give them the land. But once their votes had been cast, the result was registered as the "will of the people," and regarded as holding good for months and even for years. What better proof did the Bolsheviks want of their contention that parliamentary democracy is a sham, if unaccompanied by industrial democracy, which removes the propertied class from its virtual monopoly over propaganda? Anyone who observed the elections from Petrograd at this time could see

that the mere holding of them was calculated to reduce the whole system of parliamentary government to a farce. My own impression, after receiving reports from the provinces, was that the Bolshevik and Left S.R. coalition increased its prestige when it became clear that the Constituent Assembly had come into being under conditions that made it a parody and not a reflection of the movements going on in Russia at this stage of the Revolution. And loss of confidence in the parliamentary idea meant increased prestige for the idea of proletarian industrial councils. Thus Lenin's star was still in the ascendancy.

CHAPTER XII

STRUGGLE WITH PRUSSIAN MILITARISM BEGINS

BORN Bolsheviks and anti-Bolshevik Socialists were agreed by this time that peace and a liquidation of the World War was essential to save the Revolution. The only dispute was on the question of how to obtain it. The "Revolutionary Democracy" in the Menshevik and Right S.R. Soviets had spent eight months trying to secure it by persuasive words and had failed. The Bolsheviks had now come into power, assisted by the rank and file of army and navy, and of the northern industrial proletariat, who insisted at once on definite steps being taken for the ending of the war. But the question was whether workmen's and soldiers' Soviets would be able to secure sufficient recognition of their stability and authority to ensure, firstly, that the Allies would not commence repressive measures against them, and, secondly, that the Imperialists of the Central Powers would be prepared to have dealings with them. The Decree on Peace was passed by the Second Soviet Congress on the night of November 8th. During the next ten days the struggle with the armed forces of the Cadets, of Kerensky and of the Right S.R.'s, engaged the attention of the People's Commissars in Petrograd. It was not till November 20th that the first wireless went out formally inviting the Governments and working classes of the Central Powers and of the Allies to liquidate the war in a general democratic peace.

In the meantime, however, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs was not idle. A submarine was sent from Kronstadt to Stockholm with a confidential agent on board, whose knowledge of conditions in Germany enabled him to ascertain what was the attitude of the Governments of the Central Powers towards the new regime in Russia. After a few days in Stockholm this agent crossed over into Denmark, and in a frontier village in Schleswig-Holstein met confidential men of the Spartakusbund, then the illegal left group within the German Independent

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Socialist Party. As the result of this meeting Lenin's man got the following information. The German General Staff had received the first reports of the Revolution in Petrograd with mixed feelings. They set about to find out how they could utilize it to the best advantage and exploit it for the realization of the maximum war programme of the Prussian military party. The first feeling in their minds was that they should avoid if possible *de facto* recognition of the Bolsheviks and use the opportunities now opening out of expansion in the East for concessions in the West and for a settlement with the Allies. The Eastern school of German Imperialism saw that the chance which had arisen in the summer had come again. The rising revolutionary danger in the East could be used to frighten the Allied Imperialists into conniving at the annexation of Central Russia up to the line Petrograd—Moscow—Odessa, in return for evacuation of France and Belgium. After a few days, however, the German General Staff appears to have come to the conclusion that the Allied Governments were not to be had for this scheme. Whether any direct communications passed between the confidential agents of the Allies and the Central Powers in neutral countries Lenin's man did not ascertain. In any case it became clear that the Allies still regarded German Imperialism as a greater danger than the Russian Revolution, which they were inclined to laugh at and to regard as a passing phase in the East. Moreover, the military power of America was shortly to come into the arena. This, it was felt, would secure the defeat of German Imperialism, and make it possible to reckon with the Russian Revolution afterwards. Prussian militarism established in Central Russia was too big a price for the Allies to pay for the defeat of the Russian Revolution, for it would mean that the former would become an ever more dangerous competitor of Allied finance-capital in Asia and Eastern Europe.

The German General Staff, therefore, inclined on second thoughts to compromise between the Western and the Eastern schools of Prussian Imperialism. A moderate expansion in Russia, say up to the line Lake Peipus—Pinsk marshes—Kieff—Podolia, might be secured in return for peace with Russia and recognition of the Soviets as *de facto* Government. The whole military force of Germany could then be hurled on the West, for a decisive struggle there.

The People's Commissars in Petrograd, on receiving this report, saw the danger that was threatening them. They had to prevent the expansion of German Imperialism at the expense of the Russian Revolution, and, while carrying on the struggle

against the Central Powers, had to dissociate the Revolution from the plans of the Allied Imperialists. At the same time they had to avoid giving the impression in Labour and Socialist circles in Entente lands that they were, by renouncing the Treaty of London (1914), assisting the German Imperialists. They were therefore concerned to persuade the Allies to participate in any negotiations with the Central Powers and to utilize these negotiations to expose to the peoples of all lands the Imperialist designs of the ruling classes in both belligerent camps.

In the meantime steps were taken to prepare for a short-term armistice at the front. On the evening of November 20th I was present in the Smolny at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, elected by the Congress, which had just dispersed. As I arrived in the hall Lenin was speaking about the instructions which the People's Commissars proposed to give out to the soldiers' committees at the front, for initiating armistice negotiations. It was proposed that the delegates of the rank and file should get into touch with similar soldiers' councils among the enemy's troops, and, if such did not exist, with the enemy's commanding officers and staffs. This was to be done because the Russian officers of the General Staff in Mogilieff could not be relied upon to carry out instructions from Petrograd. Lenin read a telegram from General Dukhonin in reply to one sent from the People's Commissars, instructing him to draw up conditions for a general armistice. In this reply Dukhonin had said that it was impossible to draw up plans without the consent of the Allies. That, said Lenin, was the best proof that they must regard the officers of the staff as agents of the Allied capitalists, and that they must rely on the soldiers in the trenches if they were to get anything done at all. They were not, he said, going to make a separate armistice, until the Allies had sent their replies to the radio of November 20th, but the front committees of the soldiers were in the meantime to prepare the conditions and get in touch with the Germans. By this action it was also hoped to undermine the authority of the German officers and encourage the sense of comradeship between the Russian and German soldiers.

A young lieutenant from the front, was put up by the Left S.R.'s to reply to Lenin. Although the Left S.R.'s in general objected to over-centralization and frequently accused the Bolsheviks of bureaucratic tendencies, on this occasion they took the line that soldiers' committees of the rank and file were not competent to deal with such matters, which must be worked out by a central body. Lenin dealt kindly with the "intellectual muddle-heads of the Revolution," as he called them. His

powers of gentle persuasion were seen at their best that night in his reply to the Left S.R. representative. One began to see the essence of his greatness as a tactician—his power of getting opponents to accept most radical and controversial points by making valueless concessions to them on others. He carried the Central Executive with him that night. All opposition was disarmed by eleven o'clock. The Left S.R. colleagues in the Government were satisfied, the soldiers' delegates from the front were given a sense of their importance as armistice negotiators in the field of international politics, and, lastly, the People's Commissars acquired a hold over the whole rank and file organization of the army, whereby they hoped to prevent a disorderly demobilization and untold chaos.

On the following day (November 21st) the press published the reply of the Allied Military Missions to the wireless message, inviting the Allies to participate in an armistice and a general peace. The reply was clearly a calculated insult. It was addressed not to the Foreign or War Commissariat of the Soviet Government at all, but to General Dukhonin at the Staff, who was known to be fighting the soldiers' committees. It laconically stated that any attempt on the part of Russia to make peace would bring most serious consequences to Russia. This was followed by a statement from the American Red Cross, dissociating itself from this *démarche* and saying that the American Government had no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of Russia. Here were clearly to be seen differences of opinion in the ranks of the Allies.

One serious result, however, of this ill-mannered attempt of the French and British War Offices to dragoon the Russian Revolution was seen in the events which followed shortly afterwards at the General Headquarters at Mogilieff. Here Tchernoff and some members of Kerensky's ill-fated force, which had attacked Petrograd, had, as described in the last chapter, gathered in the hopes of forming an opposition Government to that of the Soviets. Meanwhile, however, the Peasant Congress in Petrograd had broken up into a Right and Left section, and the result of the Constituent Assembly elections left the Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s in a large enough minority to make the life of such an opposition Government in Mogilieff wellnigh impossible. Thus the idea of using Dukhonin's Staff as the centre of a new Government had to be abandoned. Indeed, as V. Stankevitch showed over two years later,¹ there was a tendency at the General Staff now to compromise and to summon a conference

¹ *Zizhn*, a Russian emigrant journal, published Berlin, June 1, 1920.

of all parties, including those in the Soviets, in order to consider the question of peace with Germany. But this proposal met with the opposition of the secret organization of the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" in Petrograd. Thus Dukhonin and his General Staff remained suspended in mid-air.

Soon, however, the Petrograd and Kronstadt Soviets began to act. On November 25th a large echelon of Baltic Fleet sailors and armed Petrograd workmen began to move down the railway line from Petrograd towards the front. Their movements and operations were a perfect picture of the general state of feeling of the masses at this time. A small band of determined men away in the north, fully conscious of their responsibility towards the Revolution, had decided to make an end once for all of the sabotage of the Officers' Corps, the Right S.R. and Menshevik Committees and of the Allied Military Missions at the front. Would the local populations and garrisons of the old army, scattered along their route, make any opposition to their progress and thereby save Dukhonin and the General Staff? Upon the answer to this question much depended. Cautiously the echelon approached the junction of Dno, passed it on the 26th, and approached Vitebsk, where the 53rd Army Corps, said to be quite loyal to the old regime and to have a Right S.R. Committee at its head, was stationed. A delegation of sailors went out to ask if the garrison would oppose their passage. To the horror of Dukhonin's Staff the garrison replied that they would hold themselves neutral. The echelon of sailors and Red Guards therefore passed Vitebsk and came to Orsha, where a delegation of the local Soviet came out and declared itself "on the side of the Bolshevik Commissars in Petrograd." From here it was only a short distance to Mogilieff. Along this stretch of line stood the First Finland Division, which had a strong Right S.R. and Menshevik Committee. Surely they would be loyal to their commanders! But on the approach of the echelon the soldiers of two regiments crowded round their committees' bureau and elected new men, who promptly sent out a delegation declaring their neutrality. This news caused a panic in Mogilieff, where the Turcoman-Tartar Regiment now became restive and sent in demands to Dukhonin for their demobilization. Dukhonin's Staff meanwhile was being watched by Bolshevik agents among the garrison in Mogilieff, control was placed on the telephones and on all motors passing in and out. It was clear that the Petrograd Soviet and the Baltic Fleet sailors had everywhere acquired secret sympathy among the silent masses.

Outwardly the peasant soldiers recognized the authority of their officers, but as soon as a small force of men appeared, who knew what they wanted and were prepared to take risks, the passive submission to the officers turned into benevolent sympathy to the newcomers. In this way do revolutions come about.

Dukhonin's Staff, the Right S.R. and Menshevik Committees in Mogileff could do nothing now but flee. They asked the Ukrainian Rada if they would allow them to come to Kieff, and received the reply, that they could go to the Tchernigoff province of the Ukraine, if they could get there. Most of them escaped under cover of the night, but Dukhonin honourably remained behind and, declining to flee in the face of the danger, preferred to face the Bolshevik echelon alone. The Allied Military Missions in Petrograd had in the meantime telegraphed to Dukhonin that the Allies would put no difficulty in the way of opening separate peace negotiations between Russia and Germany, and only demanded the presence of their representatives to guarantee that there should be no transference of German troops to the West front. Alas! it was too late—this eleventh-hour climb-down. The infuriated sailors and Petrograd workmen entered Mogileff. Bestialized by misery and suffering in the war, and taught by bitter experience that they could trust no one but themselves, they sought out General Dukhonin in a railway carriage at the station. The Soviet Commissars at Mogileff attempted to hold off the armed mob and made speeches, entreating the men not to besmirch the flag of the Revolution with the blood even of their enemies. It was of no avail. The unhappy General was dragged from his carriage and torn to pieces. The Allied Military Missions succeeded in escaping to the Ukraine, and General Korniloff, who had come up to render assistance with a picked force, had to flee eastwards. He held out for some days in the neighbourhood of Bielgorod, but on being followed by a Red Guard unit retired into the Ukraine and sought the protection of the Rada. The Ukraine now became the rendezvous of officers and generals of the old front.

Thus the rank and file of the Russian army and navy replied to the Allies' attempts to browbeat them by lynch justice on all Russians suspected of complicity with the Military Missions' conspiracies. It was the first blood shed after the Soviets came into power, and was the result of the action of the raw masses. The People's Commissars replied in another and more effective form. Trotsky, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, set to work

to publish the secret treaties concluded between the Tsar's Government and the Allies. On November 23rd I went to the Foreign Office and found the Soviet Commissars busy with the safes. They had at last got the keys, the absence of which had been preventing them from getting at the secret treaties. This had not mattered until now. But as soon as it was clear that the ruling classes of the Allied countries were definitely going to boycott the Soviets, it became urgently necessary to secure a weapon of defence. The best moral weapon that could be found was open diplomacy. The keys had been found with an old Foreign Office official, who had after a few days come back to work. He was brought to the room where the safes were, and was told that he must open the safes and explain their contents. He expressed his readiness to open them as soon as the Commissars made it clear that they were in possession of real power. "For," he said, "I have served Russia for thirty years, and must serve whatever party possesses enough authority to speak in her name." With these words he opened the safes. On the following days the *Izvestia* published the first of the secret treaties.

What a change the walls of the Russian Foreign Office had witnessed in these days! I remembered that two years previously, in the beautiful room overlooking the Winter Palace Square, with its French eighteenth-century chairs and tables and its portraits of the Romanoff Tsars and Tsaritzas on the wall, I had interviewed M. Sazonoff, when he was Nicolas II's Foreign Minister. We had spoken about possible reforms in Russia. Yes, the Minister had said, they were possible, even perhaps inevitable, provided that they remained within the bounds of Russia's traditions. There could be no question of anything far-reaching till the war was at an end and Germany beaten. "After all," he said, "the greatest reform of our time has been the abolition of vodka by the decree of our Emperor. Meanwhile there is only one thing that will save our people, and that is loyalty to their ancient traditions." As I looked at the chair where Sazonoff had sat, I wondered what he would say now. The Romanoffs were gone, Kerensky had gone, and what had become of the traditions? Nor had the mere abolition of vodka by a paternal autocrat helped to stem the tide. These Neros had been playing while Rome was burning.

In the next room the Soviet Commissars were busy sorting over the documents and secret treaties, which Sazonoff and the Allied Ambassadors had drawn up and signed on behalf of their Governments. The agreement which signified that France could

keep the right bank of the Rhine, if Tsarist Russia had a free hand in Poland; the treaty that divided Persia and Turkey into spheres of Allied influence; the records of the negotiations by which the Rumanian oligarchy was bribed to enter the war by promising it bits of Magyar and Serbian territory; the treaty with Italy, which promised the latter colonial spheres in Africa and Asia Minor, and extracted in return the promise that Italy should hold back the Holy See from any attempt at peace mediation—they were all there as we had thought. These, perhaps, were the “ancient traditions” to which M. Sazonoff was referring! There could be no doubt that the Soviet Commissars were making short work of them by the simple medium of publicity.

From the balcony of the Foreign Office a great red banner was flying in the winter wind. On it were inscribed the words, “Long live peace.” The whole atmosphere of the place gave the impression that the Russian revolutionaries had seriously entered upon a struggle for peace. The phrasology of the class war had, temporarily at least, disappeared from Trotsky’s vocabulary, and had been replaced by the words, “International peace of peoples.” And yet many people in these days naïvely thought that the Bolsheviks were pacifists! International peace, however, was only Trotsky’s means to obtain a greater end.

It was soon clear that there was no use in waiting any longer for an official reply from the Allied Governments to the radio of November 20th. So on November 29th another was sent out to the German and Austrian Governments, for the Russian soldiers at the front were getting more and more restive, and those who had not already gone home were sending delegates to the Smolny threatening to do so. It was thought, therefore, that when the Allies saw that the Soviet Government had the power to conclude a separate armistice, they might alter their Pecksniffian tone. On the afternoon of November 30th I was present at a sitting of the All-Russian Central Soviet Executive. The first item on the order of the day was the election of delegates for the armistice negotiations. It was already clear that the German soldiers could not be relied upon to sign an armistice over the heads of their officers, as had been hoped for, and therefore it was necessary to go to work by the usual methods laid down by the customs of capitalist countries. The workers’ republic had to send its representatives to meet those of the “Imperialist bandit of Germany,” as the Bolshevik press had been calling the Kaiser for the last week. Unfortunately, the German soldiers had not seen their Emperor in the same light. The Central Soviet Executive, being the parliament of that part

of Russia which acknowledged the Soviets, had now to make its *debut* before the agents of a foreign Power. Its President, Sverdloff, who was like the Speaker of the House of Commons, read out in the big hall of the Smolny the names of delegates proposed by the Bolshevik and the Left S.R. parties. For the former Kameneff's name was down. He was generally regarded as one of the safest men for such a mission. The Left S.R.'s appointed, amongst others, Lieutenant Matislavsky, who had been an officer in the Tsar's army and had some practical military knowledge. Someone from the back of the hall then proposed that a non-party delegate should be sent, and put forward the name of "old Ivan," a peasant representative of the Petrograd provincial Soviet. A peasant with long grey beard, dressed in a greasy sheepskin and high Russian boots, got up. "Comrades," he said, "I don't belong to any party, but I am one of Russia's toilers who live by the sweat of their brow. Our people must have land and peace. And although we know we have nothing good to expect from Kaiser Wilhelm, we must make the best bargain we can with him, now that the Allies have deserted us. Comrades, I am poor and uneducated, and I cannot read and write like most of you, but, old as I am, I will go with you to the front to show the Prussian generals that it is the voice of the workers now that counts in Russia, and that in spite of our darkness we have overthrown the power of the landlords and the *baryns*." The old peasant resumed his seat amid great enthusiasm, and the armistice delegation was duly elected.

The next item on the order of the day was the ratification of the decree abolishing the death sentence throughout the territories of the Republic. In a short speech the delegate from the front asked for a unanimous vote. "Russia of the workers, peasants and soldiers, having secured her victory over the exploiters, can afford to be clement to her enemies," he said; "the Revolution has taken such strong roots in the hearts of the people that repressive measures are unnecessary." The decree was ratified unanimously. It had to all practical purposes been in force since the first day of the November Revolution. Those persons who had lost their lives since then had been those who were killed in open fight against the Red Guard or had been the victims of outbursts of mob violence, as in the case of General Dukhonin. In this period of the Revolution the Soviets found it unnecessary to go beyond such measures as arrest and imprisonment to put down crime and political offences against the Republic. There

* *Baryn* is a Russian word meaning "Seigneur."

was reluctance on the part of the revolutionaries to use the weapon which Korniloff, after strong pressure, had succeeded in forcing Kerensky to accept. But how long could the Russian Revolution continue its conciliatory tactics?

The last item that evening was the question of requisitioning warm clothes from the bourgeoisie for the use of the Red Guards. Workmen's delegates from the factories got up and read reports on what had been done. So many fur coats, so many warm shirts, so many woollen caps had been requisitioned and sent off to various fronts. The family of each person, not a workman, peasant or soldier, was allowed to retain one fur coat and three warm shirts for each person. The rest was to be requisitioned at a fixed price. Complaints were made that the work had not been properly done, and that there were districts of Petrograd and Moscow where the bourgeoisie had made no contribution. Delegates of the Left S.R.'s agreed that greater activity was needed. "Comrades," said a Bolshevik Commissar from the platform, "we are only beginning; our working apparatus is still very small. You must give us time. But you may rest assured that we are doing everything in our power to secure that those who have lived on the labours of others shall in future pay their just contribution to our brave comrades, who are, with arms in their hands, defending the Revolution." The sitting closed, and I went home through the snow. At the entrance of the Smolny I passed a Red Guard sentry, dressed in a thin tunic and huddled over a small fire. A cold wind was blowing, and, as I looked at him, I shuddered and wrapped my own fur coat closer round me.

During the next two nights (December 1st and 2nd) I was engaged in doing watchman's duty at the gate of the block tenement building on the Fontanka, where I was living. By order of the district Soviet, a house committee was to be formed for each dwelling. This committee was to be responsible for the clearing away of snow from the street opposite the house, and was to keep two inmates each night on guard in case of disorders in the town. It happened that just now drunken pogroms were breaking out in various parts of the city. A secret organization had been discovered by the Military Revolutionary Committee. This organization was connected with the Tsarist Okhrana, or secret police, and was engaged in sending agents to break into wine cellars and distribute the contents gratis to the public, in order to demoralize the Red Guard. There were still a number of soldiers from the regiments of the old garrison who had not yet gone home. They were for the most part

composed of politically backward elements, who were ready to take part in any disorder presenting the chance of plunder. It was a common thing to hear, while on watch duty, the sounds of hoarse shouting and solitary revolver shots ringing through the cold midnight air. There were obviously not enough Red Guards to put down the disorders, since they broke out in several parts of the city at once, and the most reliable Red Guard units had been sent to various parts of the provinces and to the German front. About midnight on the 2nd a gang of "pogromists" came round to our gate and demanded entrance on the ground that they were Red Guards and were "searching for a counter-revolutionary agent." We telephoned at once to the district Soviet for assistance, and were told that a Red Guard unit would shortly be on the way. In the meantime the "pogromists" had departed.

On the following day I had occasion to go over to the Vassily Ostroff. Throughout the whole of this part of the city revolver shots could be heard every few minutes, indicating that bands of rioters were at work, raiding cellars and firing in the air to create panic. Every now and then the clatter of a machine-gun would show that the district Soviet had sent a Red Guard unit to clear out the nests. The remnants of the soldiers of the garrison were absolutely unreliable, and, if sent, invariably joined the rioters, thereby increasing the demoralization. Matters became so serious that on December 3rd the Petrograd Soviet discussed the necessity of requesting the Central Soviet Executive to reintroduce the death sentence for all persons caught plundering and engaging in drunken pogroms. Fortunately, the ring-leaders were arrested after a few days and put in the Peter and Paul Fortress, thus preventing the necessity of more serious measures. Isolated cases of drunken pogroms, however, continued all through December, but the agents of the Okhrana, after the arrest of the pogrom leaders, adopted other tactics. They organized house-breaking bands. One of the chief organizers of these was a former Greek subject and officer of the Tsar's army. A number of public institutions were broken into, and district Soviets and schools were robbed. The Cadet press printed all news of these robberies, as if they were the work of the Soviet Commissars. At last things got so bad that the Central Soviet Executive had to take steps to deal with this form of counter-revolutionary activity. The Military Revolutionary Committee had by the second week in December been reorganized and renamed the "Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution," which subsequently became

so famous. It was composed of certain most trustworthy members of the Bolshevik and Left S.R. parties, and had at this stage of the Revolution only power to arrest, collect material, and hand over to the Justice Commission of the Central Soviet Executive. Under pressure from the Petrograd Soviet, it was at last decided to reintroduce the death sentence for cases of crime, plundering and inciting to drunken pogroms. Thus it came about that after six weeks, during which the death sentence was abolished, the Soviet authorities were compelled to reintroduce it for criminal cases again. The first victim was the Tsarist officer of Greek extraction.

On the evening of December 8th I attended a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive at the Smolny. The armistice delegation had just returned from the front and was to make its report. The leader of the United Internationalists, a small group recently formed among the intellectuals round Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn*, raised several points at the opening of the sitting. He objected to the haste with which the armistice negotiations had been commenced, pointing to the dangers of alienating the Allied democracies. What guarantee, he asked, could they have that the German General Staff would not remove troops to the West to fight against the Allies? The leader of the Polish Socialist group in Russia, Lapinsky, also warned the Council of the People's Commissars that the Prussian militarists would certainly try to use the Russian Revolution to strengthen its hold on Poland. Kameneff then rose to make his official report on the negotiations. The delegates had succeeded, he said, in securing an armistice for ten days. They had proposed a general armistice for all fronts, including the western. But the German General Staff had replied that this was impossible, because Russia's Allies had refused to participate. They had then demanded that full reports of the proceedings should be published to the world and transmitted by radio. The Germans made excuses, and the delegates had then declared that they would reserve for themselves the right to publish their reports of the proceedings. They had demanded a six months' armistice and the evacuation by the Germans of the islands of Dago and Moonsund. That straw had broken the Prussian camel's back. General Hoffmann had asked them if they thought they had come as victors, when the German army was standing far within Russian territory. The demand was refused, and they then proposed that no German troops should be transferred to the West. After a long discussion the Germans agreed not to transfer any large units to the western

front after the commencement of peace negotiations. This, said Kameneff, showed clearly that Russia was not deserting the Allied democracies. But how far she would be able to maintain this position depended entirely on what steps the latter took between now and the opening of peace negotiations to force their Governments to listen to the appeals of the Russian Revolution. Replying to the criticism of the Polish representative, Kameneff said that they were quite aware that the German generals were trying to use the Russian Revolution for their own Imperialist aims, but they were attacking the German Imperialists in their weakest spot. They had already called forth the indignant protests of the German General Staff, because they had printed and distributed to the German soldiers in the trenches the verbal reports of the proceedings at the armistice negotiations.

After Kameneff's speech a resolution of confidence in and thanks to the armistice delegation was passed unanimously. The general tone of the workmen and soldiers in the hall was one of confidence. For the first time in history workmen from factory benches and soldiers from the ranks were in control of their own destiny. All the speeches that came from the soldiers were to the effect that the men in the trenches had waited eight months and would wait no longer. They had been betrayed by their leaders and rulers, and now they relied on themselves alone to solve the problem of war and peace.

The short armistice thus concluded gave the Allies another opportunity to consider whether they would change their policy and join with the Russian Revolution in an attempt to secure peace by exposing the Imperialist designs of the Prussian warlords to the German people from the conference table. I do not think that any of the People's Commissars or of the members of the Central Soviet Executive were under an illusion about the Allies' attitude towards them during these days. One could see from the tone of the Bolshevik and Left S.R. press that they were aware that the Allied Governments had plans for annexation and domination of the economic resources of the world, and that these plans in no way differed from those of the Prussian warlords, except perhaps that they were clothed with a thicker veneer of hypocrisy. But it was absolutely necessary to make this fact clear to Labour and to the Socialists of the Allied lands, and to refrain from meeting the German generals face to face at a peace conference table till everything had been done to induce the Allies to participate also. On December 12th, therefore, a wireless

message to all was sent out from the Tsarskoye station. In this message the Commissar for Foreign Affairs declared that those Governments who declined to accept or even to answer Russia's invitation to general peace and armistice negotiations would be responsible if the discussions were now carried on without their participation. The Socialists of Germany and Austria also were called upon to press their Governments to accept a peace based on the programme of the Russian Revolution.

Meanwhile, another delegation was sent to the German front by the Central Soviet Executive to negotiate for the extension of the armistice over a long period. On December 14th news came that the German Generals, in reply to the Russian demand not to remove any troops, even small units, to the West front during the armistice, had stated that they could only agree to the continuation of the conditions laid down in the short armistice. I was present that evening at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, at which Trotsky spoke on behalf of the People's Commissars. In his speech I noted the following words: "We categorically demand that the German General staff shall agree not to transfer any troops from the East to the West, because we shall never be party to assisting even unconsciously one Imperialism against another. Moreover, we wish the working classes in the Allied lands to see that our separate armistice may be widened at any moment into a general armistice. Rather than give way on this we will break off the negotiations altogether." The members of the Central Soviet Executive cheered these words to the echo. Before the close of the sitting, however, a telegram was read from the front, which stated that the Germans had agreed not to transfer units greater than a battalion from the East front after the signing of the new armistice. Even this was clearly not satisfactory, because, as anyone could see, the Germans could remove whole divisions in small units. But the German generals were adamant, and, in the absence of any moral support from the Allies, there was nothing to do but to bow to the superior force and to trust to the peace negotiations to rouse the working classes of Germany and the Allied lands out of their lethargy.

On December 19th, as there was no reply from the Allies to the official invitation by wireless, there was nothing to be done but to invite the Governments of the Central Powers alone. Technically, of course, this was a breach of the Treaty of London of August 1914, by which the Allied Governments bound themselves not to make peace separately. Inasmuch, however, as

the Tsar's Government had made this Treaty without consulting any popular body, not even the Duma, elected on a property franchise, it was not to be expected that a revolutionary authority, created by a great popular movement which struck at the roots of the old system of government, was going to take much account of its existence. The Russian revolutionaries felt that their duty was done, when they had at every stage of the armistice negotiations stopped to invite the Allies to participate and had given them time to reply. They upheld the sovereign right of a free people to repudiate treaties made without their consent and behind their backs, and all the more so when the keeping of these treaties meant the enslavement of their people under foreign banks and Military Missions.

Nevertheless, there was some criticism of this step of the People's Commissars, even from elements in Russia, which were not openly hostile to the Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s. Thus Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn* wrote on December 15th: "Though the Bolsheviks are the first to have a real foreign policy, they nevertheless rely too much on the crude discontent of raw soldiery, wanting peace at any price, rather than on the international tendency of conscious democracy. It is indispensable, therefore, to summon immediately an international Socialist conference to organize the propaganda of a peace programme on a wide basis, in order to prevent it taking a disorganized form." This attempt to revive the plan for the Stockholm Conference, which had met such an ill fate earlier in the year, was not taken very seriously at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. My own impression of the situation at that time is contained in a telegram to the *Manchester Guardian*: "The Soviet Government would undoubtedly welcome an international Socialist conference at Stockholm or any other place, provided that both Majority and Minority sections of Socialist opinion were represented there. This, however, should take place at once, for the smallest delay would be fatal in the present state of Russia. My impression is that the German General Staff, relying on the desire of the Russian soldier for peace at any price, is trying to isolate the Russian Revolution and reap its own harvest of advantages from the situation thus created. Thus the Soviet Government, lured by the German Imperialists, pushed by the Russian soldiery, and deserted by the Allied democracies, is forced to open separate peace negotiations."

On December 21st the peace delegation was chosen to meet the diplomats of the Central Powers, who in the meantime had sent a favourable reply. The head of the delegation was Joffe,

whose previous training and experience had made him admirably suited to get on with men like Herr Kühlmann and Count Czernin, the diplomatic plenipotentiaries of the Central Powers. On December 23rd the peace negotiations began at Brest-Litovsk. From the first the diplomats and generals of the Central Powers, in spite of the differences between themselves, were all agreed on the desirability of getting peace with Russia as soon as possible, provided they could secure important military and economic advantages in the East. To secure this they were prepared to go so far as to give lip service to the peace programme of the Russian Revolution. It was clear from the first that their tactics were to treat the Russian delegates well, honour them as equals, and create the impression abroad that "a democratic peace of peoples" was being signed. Protected thus, they would then realize Ludendorff's full war programme.

There was great excitement in Petrograd at this time over the news that Russian revolutionary peace delegates had actually met the Prussian warlords and the diplomats of the Central Powers round a conference table. The Cadet press was busy making insinuations that the Bolsheviks were only realizing their nefarious plan, long thought out, of selling Russia and the Allies to the Germans in return for gold. When the details of the first days of negotiation came on December 24th, the tone of the Cadet press became more subdued, that of the Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s more confident, while the intellectuals round the *Novaya Zhizn* continued their attitude of detached criticism. The Russian delegates had, to the consternation of the Prussian warlords, published the full report of the proceedings, which they had opened by proposing five points as a basis of peace: (1) The removal of troops from all occupied military districts. (2) The political independence of nationalities enjoying the same before the war. (3) The right of national groups within all states to choose by referendum, under which suzerainty they should be placed. (4) The right of national minorities to cultural autonomy. (5) No indemnities; all levies to be returned, and no economic boycott after the war.

The Russians, in fact, had proposed five points, which were the same in essence as the fourteen points of President Wilson, published only a few weeks later. These points had been adopted as the peace programme of the Russian Revolution, as far back as April of that year, when the Petrograd Soviet, over the head of the Provisional Government, made its famous appeal to the workers of the world. But they were put forward now, as the Bolshevik press explained, in order to draw from the

Central Powers some sort of statement of their war aims. The latter had to give lip service to the five points. They made their reservations, of course. For instance, they said that (2) could not be applied in the East as long as Russia's Allies did not agree to join in and apply it in the West; moreover, the right of self-determination of nationalities within existing states must be "in conformity with the constitutions of these states." Still, the news that the peace delegates of the Central Powers had accepted the principle of the five points was trumpeted abroad as a great triumph. December 28th was proclaimed a public holiday and a big demonstration organized on the Field of Mars. From the early morning hours of the wintry Petrograd day, which began at ten o'clock, to dusk, which came on about half-past three, I stood in the snow and watched an endless procession of factory workers, Red Guards and garrison soldiers. I remembered the last great demonstration on this same spot on the eve of the disastrous June offensive. The banners no longer bore inscriptions calling on the workers to overthrow the "capitalist Government of Kerensky" and set up the power of the Soviets. To-day the words on the banners appealed to a much wider audience—to the working class international, to Labour in the Allied lands, and to the German and Austrian Socialists. The Russian Revolution had in the six months that had passed advanced nearer to its goal, and the Soviets were now speaking as the dominant power, at any rate for North and Central Russia.

The following day (December 29th) brought bitter disillusionment. News came that the Prussian General Hoffmann, Chief of Staff on the East front, had made an independent *démarche*, and had put a quite new interpretation on the five points proposed by the Russians. The atmosphere in the Smolny was one of depression. Was yesterday's great demonstration, after all, premature? The Bolshevik leaders, however, were not taken aback, and their press showed clearly that they felt they had scored no less a triumph by making the Prussian generals unmask than they would have done if their formulas had been accepted. It had come about as follows: On December 25th a declaration had been made by the delegates of the Central Powers. In this declaration the moderating influence of the Austrian diplomat, Count Czernin, could be clearly seen. It laid down principles for a peace, which at any rate provided a basis of discussion with the Russians. It included no territorial concessions, no indemnities for war expenditure, or for private losses caused by war. It included resumption of trade under most favoured nation clauses, a plebiscite for Poland, Courland

and Livonia, and a special agreement with Germany for gradual evacuation of occupied territories. On December 28th, however, General Hoffmann, incensed with the Austrian diplomat, had overridden him and had told the Russians that Germany could not evacuate the occupied territories before a general peace, and, moreover, regarded the existing authorities set up in the occupied areas as evidence that the populations there had already given their vote in favour of separation from Russia. It was now clear that the rock upon which these peace negotiations between the two Governments, representing mutually hostile classes, was sooner or later bound to break, had been reached. It concerned the interpretation of the phrase "self-determination of nationalities." What was to happen in the case of small nationalities, composed of classes which were in a state of open or suppressed conflict with one another? Furthermore, if one or both of the Governments under whose auspices the self-determination was to take place, sympathized with one or other of the classes within the small nationality, could an impartial plebiscite in the presence of either of the two armies of occupation take place? To put these questions was to answer them. For the Prussian warlords would never withdraw their army from the Baltic provinces and permit a plebiscite to take place under the auspices of an army of Russian workmen and landless peasants. Neither would the latter regard a vote taken under the shadow of Prussian bayonets as binding on them. The proposal of Count Czernin to have the plebiscite under a neutral Power did not arouse any enthusiasm in either camp, because it was realized that, if the neutral Power was a Socialist Republic, it would sympathize with the one side, and, if a capitalist state, would sympathize with the other. The fact was that "self-determination" was the word used at Brest-Litovsk to camouflage the class struggle going on in the western border provinces of the former Russian Empire at this time and to facilitate the claims of the Prussian warlords on the one hand and of the Russian revolutionaries on the other. Nor was the apparent neutrality of Count Czernin anything more than a well-concealed attempt to steal a hen-roost while two neighbours were quarrelling. For the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy also had its plans of extending the influence of the Hapsburgs over the Ukraine and Poland.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BORDER STATES AND SELF-DETERMINATION

THE crisis over the self-determination of the border States, and particularly the Ukraine, soon became acute. The Russian delegates had asked for and had obtained a postponement of the Peace Conference till January 4th, to give the Allies time to participate in the negotiations, in case the latter had in the meantime changed their minds. While the Soviets were waiting for a reply from the Allies to another wireless, sent out from Tsarskoye, the Ukrainian Rada took steps which greatly complicated the situation. In order to understand what happened, one must describe in some detail events in the Ukraine immediately after the November Revolution. The Ukrainian Rada, the composition of which is described in a previous chapter, had by the middle of November overcome all the opposition of the Great Russian working-class elements in the South Russian towns, and, with the assistance of the nationalist intelligentsia and the peasant proprietors, had declared itself the sole authority in the land. The French Military Mission at Petrograd had seen in this action of the Rada a hope for the realization of its plans against the Soviets in North Russia. And the Rada, knowing that it had offended the Great Russian bourgeoisie, by its separatist propaganda and the Great Russian working classes of the towns in East Ukraine, by its readiness to compromise with the middle classes, was also looking about for allies. In the second week of November the official *Izvestia* in Petrograd published a statement that a confidential agent of the French Military Mission in Kieff had signed an agreement with the commander of the "Haidamaki" or Ukrainian national troops, who were in the service of the Rada.* There was every reason to believe

* This statement of the *Izvestia* was never denied by the agents of the French Government in Russia. It was repeated in various wireless messages sent out by the Soviet Government during the summer of 1919, when Denikin was invading the Ukraine.

that the leading men of the Ukrainian Social Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary parties in the Rada knew at the time of this agreement, which provided for financial support, military supplies and recognition of Ukrainian independence in return for French control of the railways, French priority claims to concessions, a firm front against Bolshevik North Russia, and the continuance of the war with the Central Powers. Thus the independence of the Rada was from the first sold to foreign financial interests by the petty bourgeoisie of the Ukraine. But the obligations which the latter had taken on were clearly too heavy for it to fulfil. For the Ukrainian peasants were just as war-weary and just as land-hungry as the peasants of North Russia, and if they had not as yet formed Soviets to carry out their wishes, that was due to the fact that the proletariat of the Ukraine was too small to form successful political organizations based on industrial councils. Thus the initiative had been left to the intellectual nationalists and to the rich peasant proprietors. But the latter could not ignore the war-weariness of the Ukrainian peasant soldiers, and the parties of the Rada soon realized that they could not fulfil that part of the agreement with the French which forced them to continue the war with the Central Powers.

If there was one thing that was consistent in the history of the Rada's career, that was its treachery. The parties which composed it knew that they could not carry out the agreement, but that did not prevent them from taking French money. In the last week of December the Bolshevik press published a letter, intercepted in passing between General Alexeieff, who was mobilizing a corps of officers on the Don, to fight the North Russian Soviets, and the French military representatives with the Rada. In it General Alexeieff explained that arrangements had already been made by the Allied Missions for financing and supplying the Rada, together with other anti-Bolshevik bodies in South Russia and the Cossack generals, with arms and ammunition. The ambiguous relations that existed between the Rada on the one hand and General Alexeieff's Officer Corps and General Kaledin's Cossacks on the Don on the other were soon destined to bring the former into conflict with the North Russian Soviets. The People's Commissars early in December began to send Red Guards against Kaledin, who had started, under pressure from Alexeieff and the Cadet leaders on the Don, to advance his Cossacks towards Voronesch and the central provinces. He had received support for this move from Cossack units, which the Rada had allowed to pass through its territory from the German front.

The People's Commissars asked the Rada to facilitate the passage of Russian troops, loyal to the Soviets, through its territory to the Don. This request was refused. An explanation was demanded, and the Rada replied on December 19th by publishing the Third "Universal" (decree), declaring the independence of the Ukraine. The People's Commissars on the following day sent an ultimatum to the Rada. They set forth a whole series of accusations against the latter, including non-observance of neutrality in the struggle between the northern Soviets and Generals Alexeieff and Kaledin, the arrest of local workmen's Soviets in the coal and industrial districts of the Eastern Ukraine; the insistence on an immediate concentration of all Ukrainian troops on the south-west front and the withdrawal of Great Russian units to the north—an operation which at that moment would have caused great confusion and crisis in the transport. On December 24th the Bolshevik organ, *Pravda*, explained the attitude of the Northern Soviet Government in the following passage of its leading article: "The right of national self-determination is used by the petty bourgeoisie of the Ukraine to deprive the industrial workers and poorer peasants of the right of social self-determination. The national conflict between us and the Rada is thus a class conflict." On the same day I interviewed in the Smolny a delegate from the Ukrainian Rada, who had just come up from Kieff to try to avoid an open breach. He gave me the following statement, which explains fairly well the Rada's case at that time: "The Ukrainian Rada consists of the National Socialist parties and of representatives of various democratic bodies. There are no Great Russian Cadets on the Rada, and therefore the Bolshevik accusation that it is reactionary is false. The Rada in its 'Second Universal' has declared that the private estates are national property to be divided among the peasants, and is also about to legalize the eight hours' day. But the Bolshevik Government insists that all government in the Ukraine should be through Soviets. The Bolshevik and Left S.R. Government of North Russia has no right to prescribe to us the system of government in the Ukraine, especially when it pretends to favour self-determination of nationalities."

This statement, when compared with the passage from the *Pravda*, quoted above, shows clearly the basic cause of this and all other subsequent quarrels between the North Russian Soviets and the various "democratic" bodies that arose from time to time in the Ukraine. They also shed much light on the controversy which raged about this time at Brest-Litovsk over the words "self-determination of nationalities." The conflict

between the North Russian Soviets and the Rada was due to the difference in the rate of development of the class struggle in North Russia, as compared with that in the Ukraine. It did not concern the question whether Russia should remain in the world war or not. "We have no disagreement with the Bolsheviks about the armistice, but we demand a special Ukrainian representation at the Peace Conference," said the same Ukrainian delegate to me at the end of my interview with him at the Smolny. And yet the Allied Embassies and Missions either could not or would not at this time see that the Rada was preparing to sell them, after having taken their money and their supplies. They persisted in the belief that the Rada would honour the engagement entered into by the French military agent and the commander of the "Haidamaki." The same failure to appreciate the situation was characteristic of the organs of public opinion in England. The *Manchester Guardian* alone realized the truth, and wrote in its leader on December 31st: "Whatever may be the domestic differences between different districts and nationalities in Russia, there is no difference of opinion as to the necessity of an early peace. Thus the Ukraine, which has hitherto asserted a somewhat stubborn independence of the Petrograd Government, has itself sent delegates to the Peace Conference."

The People's Commissars did not push their quarrel with the Rada to the point of refusing to sit at the Peace Conference table with the representatives of the latter. True, the status of the Ukrainian delegation was not quite clear. The Soviet delegation under Joffe had not raised any objection to their presence and permitted them to speak for the Ukraine. But it was not known whether they spoke as an independent delegation, or as a sub-section of the Great Russian Soviet delegation. The point was not cleared up till the second time the Peace Conference came together. This was in the second week of January, and the long-drawn crisis between the People's Commissars and the Ukrainian Rada then came to a head.

On January 3rd I was present at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive in the Smolny. The time for the reply of the Allies to the invitation of the People's Commissars to take part in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations had expired. The last chance of a general peace was gone. The general attitude of the Soviet Deputies, especially of the representatives of the soldiers at the front, the sailors of the fleet and the Petrograd factory workmen, was that now at last the time had come to act alone. "We have justified ourselves before the Socialist international by waiting all this time," I overheard one soldier delegate say in conversa-

tion before the proceedings began. Nevertheless, the speaker for the Bolshevik party got up and proposed that the Central Powers should by radio be invited to transfer the negotiations to a neutral country. It was necessary, he said, to show Socialist and Labour parties in the West that they were doing everything to bring the Prussian generals out into the open and unmask them before Europe. The proposal found general support and was carried unanimously. After that the peace delegates were elected. The Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Trotsky, was to lead the delegation.

Two days later (January 5th) we heard that the Central Powers had refused to consider the transference of the Peace Conference from Brest-Litovsk to a neutral country. The Central Soviet Executive met again that night. Delegates from the front reported that delay would be dangerous, because already, over considerable parts of the front, the soldiers had left the trenches and were wandering to their homes. If this got to be widely known, the Germans would undoubtedly put up their terms for making peace. Was there any reply from the Allies? asked a sailor from the Baltic Fleet. None! came the reply from the representative of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs on the platform. That of course settled the matter. It was decided that the peace delegates should leave that night.

On the following day we heard that the Ukrainian Rada's delegation, without waiting for the arrival at Brest-Litovsk of the representatives of the Soviets, had already begun negotiations for a separate peace with the Central Powers. This news shed a gloom over all at the Smolny, for everyone whom I met that day seemed to feel instinctively that there was an intrigue on foot to knife the Soviets in the back. That evening I met the prominent Bolshevik, Piatakoff, in the rooms of a friend. He was occupying the post of President of the State Bank, and in that capacity had been engaged in drawing up the decree for the annulling of the Russian State debt. But he was a Ukrainian, and important as these financial questions were at this moment, especially when the methods proposed for their solution were likely to involve the Revolution in war with the Allies, or at the very least in a blockade, there appeared to be other questions which were for him almost more important. Piatakoff was itching for war with the Rada, and I gathered that he was at the head of a group in the Council of People's Commissars, which was agitating for more energetic measures and for the occupation of Kieff by the Red Guards. Up till now the People's Commissars had shrunk from taking these steps, partly because

the best Red Guards and Baltic sailors' units were being concentrated against Kaledin and Korniloff, and partly because the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs had been for some weeks past sending out radio messages proclaiming amongst other things the "self-determination of nationalities," which was being broadly interpreted outside Russia as meaning North Russian disinterestedness in the fate of the Ukraine. Piatakoff, however, was of opinion that these tactics were not sound, and that that simple formula might bind the Russian Revolution to stand by, while in the Ukraine a dictatorship of the landlords and of the Prussian generals was being set up under the cover of a petty bourgeois Rada. He was talking of asking permission to resign from the State Bank and lead the Red Guards in an advance into the Ukraine. And I confess that it seemed as if his impetuous Ukrainian temperament made him more fitted for this job than for tackling the problem of how to steer the Revolution's finances through the complications which were likely to arise in the near future. Nevertheless, this decision to take military action against the Rada, while it was a natural reply to the latter's treachery in opening negotiations with the Germans behind the back of the Soviets, was not going to make Trotsky's task at Brest-Litovsk any easier when he came to meet the Prussian generals. For the latter could use the Soviets own watchword, "self-determination of nationalities," to establish in the Ukraine a class dictatorship, which suited their military plans. The Russian Revolution was now in this Ukrainian question in a most serious dilemma. And every proletarian revolution is likely to find itself in such a position in future, unless it adds to "self-determination of nationalities" some definition of its attitude towards neighbouring nations or territories, where only a belated middle-class revolution has taken place and has brought to the surface petty bourgeois elements hostile to the proletarian dictatorship. It must then either recognize the right of these elements to self-determine in their sense and set up their class dictatorship, or else it must by force interfere from outside, to assist its class allies to socially self-determine. Unfortunately, the Russian Soviets tried to do the latter without taking care to see if the external situation was ripe for this serious step in the Ukraine.

On January 9th we got the first news from Brest-Litovsk about the peace negotiations. The Soviet delegation had arrived on the 7th. The German diplomats and generals had made preparations to receive the Russians with pomp and ceremony. It was clear that they were reckoning that the Soviet repre-

sentatives would be satisfied with a formal recognition of the peace programme without annexations and indemnities and with self-determination, but would sign a treaty which sacrificed these principles and permitted the extension of German control along the whole of Russia's western borders, from Reval to Odessa. This surrender was to be made palatable by a display of lavish hospitality. This of course was known to Trotsky, who at once forbade all members of the delegation to accept any hospitality from the representatives of the Central Powers. The Russians remained in the rooms allotted to them, and refused even to have meals with the Germans and Austrians. Amongst the latter there were clearly differences of opinion from the outset. General Hoffmann was Ludendorff's man, and was out for the realization of the whole war plan of the German General Staff, i.e. for the line Reval-Odessa and as much more as could be obtained by fostering the independence of the Don, North Caucasus and Central Asian Republics, which would fall under the influence of Germany. A man who only knew the language of the Potsdam parade ground, he was not influenced by arguments pointing to the danger of an ambitious Eastern programme before the Allies had been either defeated or bought off in the West. This danger was, however, discerned by the German diplomat, Kühlmann, who, as representing the more "realist" policy of the Berlin Foreign Office, would have been prepared to limit the area in the East under German military occupation to, roughly, the then existing one and to await developments in the West before putting the thumb-screw on the Bolsheviks. Lastly, there was Count Czernin, the Austrian diplomat. From the outset this cheap edition of Metternich assumed the air of a democratic dilettante, seeking advantage for his Hapsburg Court in the triangular contest between Trotsky, Hoffmann and Kühlmann. He had no objection, as subsequent events showed, to the Reval-Odessa line and to the German General Staff's plans in the Baltic, provided that under the cover of "self-determination of nationalities" a Hapsburg Arch-Duke could be enthroned in Poland and the Ukrainian Rada set up in Kieff under an obligation to provide corn for the hungry Austrian cities.

On January 9th the representatives of the Central Powers agreed among themselves to make Trotsky define his attitude towards the interpretation of the phrase "self-determination" as put forward by General Hoffmann at the previous meeting at Brest. The Soviet delegates were to be asked to regard Poland and those Baltic states under German occupation as having

already decided for some form of connection with the Central Powers. Now, if they accepted this interpretation of self-determination, they would have at once to renounce the struggle with the Prussian generals. This would expose them to the danger of appearing before the Labour and Socialist parties of the Allies as the helpers of German Imperialism. On the other hand, if they declined to accept it, they would have to furnish the necessary material forces to enable the proletarian elements of the border states to self-determine in another sense. On the 11th Trotsky replied that the Central Powers were trying to decide the fate of the Baltic states and Poles without consulting the wishes of the peoples. The delegates of the Central Powers thereupon proposed that the representative institutions which had already come into life in these lands should be invited to send delegates to Brest. Trotsky agreed, and in doing so made the first serious mistake in the foreign policy of the Russian Revolution. Without knowing it, he committed the Revolution to the recognition of the puppet Governments set up by German military authorities in the occupied territories. True, he speedily made good his mistake by publishing on the next day (January 12th) a declaration of the Russian delegation, which contained the following passage: "The Russian Government considers that its task consists of guaranteeing to the occupied districts free opportunity to decide their internal social problem and their international status."¹ But he had given the Prussian generals their chance, and they had not been slow to take it.

The dilemma, in which the Revolution was thus placed, forced the Soviets to have recourse to extreme measures. In the lobbies of the Smolny during these days I used to hear the view expressed that a Soviet regime must be established at all costs in the Ukraine, since here at least the Central Powers had not as yet extended their occupation. *Beati possidentes* had become the parole now. It was generally assumed that the Red Guards, advancing from Kharkoff, would secure the proletarian form of self-determination in the Ukraine and thus prepare the way for a similar solution in the Baltic provinces. Indeed, the general feeling among the rank and file of the delegates in the Central Soviet Executive was so strong that the Council of the People's Commissars were obviously being pushed into energetic action in the Ukraine, as a reply to the Central Powers' attempt to secure *their* interpretation of self-determination in the Baltic

¹ *Livre Rouge ; recueil des documents diplomatiques relatifs aux relations entre la Russie et la Pologne*, Com. Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 1920, pp. 9, 10.

provinces. But the Prussian generals, strengthened by Trotsky's mistake on January 11th, felt themselves strong enough now to stop any attempt of the Soviets to intervene in the Ukraine. Moreover, they knew that the Soviets had not the necessary military force and dared not risk the reopening of the war with the Central Powers over the interpretation of self-determination. They also knew that they could make the Rada appear to the Ukrainian peasants as the harbingers of peace and the Soviets as warmongers. Trotsky was trying to ride two horses at the same time. As a result he fell between them.

In Petrograd the delegates of the Red Guard and of the Baltic sailors pressed for and secured sanction for a military advance into the Ukraine. Red Guard detachments were being formed all through these days and marched up to the Smolny, where they received their orders. But it was enough to look at them to see that, while they might beat Kaledin and Korniloff on the Don and other Russian counter-revolutionary leaders of irregulars, they stood no chance against the disciplined German armies, or against military units set up in the Ukraine and Baltic provinces under the auspices of the latter. Moreover, the composition of the Red Guards was far from satisfactory in these days. True, there was a disciplined and class-conscious element, recruited mostly from the sailors of the Baltic Fleet and from the Petrograd factories. But these had for the most part gone down to the Don front, and the Red Guard of the proposed Ukrainian expedition was thus composed of very different material. The refuse from the old army began to find its way in. Soldiers, whose homes were far away in the East, and who had become accustomed to a parasitic life on the civil population behind the old front, were ready for any adventure. They readily became "Piatakoff's Prætorian Guard," and so, without any interest in or knowledge of the Ukraine, they pretended to act as "liberators of the Ukrainian people." With imperfect food supply and organization they would assuredly soon take to plundering the regions into which they came, and would thus give the German General Staff still more excuses to intervene in the Ukraine and carry out its form of "self-determination." Many of the Red Guard units refused to recognize any central authority at all, and looked upon the Soviet Executive as a dangerous phenomenon, breathing the spirit of authority, which one day might serve the interests of the counter-revolution. These units for the most part elected Anarchists and Left S.R.'s and intellectuals of syndicalist tendencies to command them. These commanders refused to recognize the Military Revolu-

tionary Committee in Petrograd, which was trying to introduce some sort of order into the campaign against Kaledin, Korniloff and the Rada. In the opinion of the leaders of these anarcho-syndicalist irregulars, the spontaneously formed unit, based on the workshop or on chance association, was the highest form of authority which the Revolution ought to tolerate. This was the basic idea behind these first Red Guard units, which were so important a factor in the military history of these times. The latter were comparable perhaps to the Sansculottes and to the obscure armed groups, which controlled some of the Paris "sections" in 1793. They were indicative of a passing phase in the Russian Revolution. But while they lasted they caused no little embarrassment to those who were trying to organize the popular forces which were bubbling up from below. And Trotsky, who had weakened his front against the Prussian generals, was to have his task made still more difficult by the ill-prepared advance of these Red Guards into the Ukraine.

On January 12th General Hoffmann came down on the conference table with his mailed fist. The negotiations were being deliberately drawn out by the Russians, who were playing for time, he said. It was necessary to show them that *they* were not the victors in this war, but the Central Powers. The negotiations must be ended within a given time, and, moreover, the Central Powers' interpretation of "self-determination" must be accepted by the Russians, otherwise the armistice would automatically cease. The effect of this speech on opinion in Soviet circles was very depressing. The rank and file of both Bolshevik and Left S.R. Parties at the Smolny were for intensifying propaganda among the German soldiers on the front with a view to parrying the attack on the Revolution, which was felt to be imminent. On the day after Hoffmann's speech the Tsarskoye wireless sent out an appeal to the workers of all the world, calling upon them to come to the aid of the Russian workers' and peasants' Republic in the hour of its distress. Special leaflets in German were printed and sent to the front for distribution in the German trenches. A propaganda department was started at the Foreign Commissariat, which issued a paper, called *Fakel*, for the German soldiers. Everything was bustle and excitement. But the Russian delegates at Brest-Litovsk took a different view of this action of Petrograd in initiating a big propaganda campaign. They saw clearly that propaganda in the German army and wireless appeals to the German workers to rise in the rear might be a two-edged sword. True, it would strike the Prussian generals in their weakest spot, and, if it

awoke an answer, would save the Russian Revolution. But if no answer came, or, worse still, if a revolutionary movement started in Germany, and was then put down, the Prussian generals, as soon as they knew they had nothing to fear, would strike a mortal blow at the Revolution. Seeing this danger, the Russian delegates at Brest-Litovsk telegraphed to Petrograd to go easy with propaganda, till something more was known of the state of feeling among the masses in Germany and in the rank and file of the army.

Two days after Hoffmann's speech, however, news came which made the Russian delegates cheer up a little. Rumbings were heard from Austria, where a serious food crisis had begun in the principal towns. The situation in Austria, in fact, had caused Count Czernin to adopt an increasingly hostile attitude towards the Prussian military party. The danger of revolutionary movements in the Austrian cities made it necessary for Count Czernin to return from Brest-Litovsk with peace and the prospects of food. Annexations, whether open or hidden, in the Baltic provinces for the glory of the German General Staff had even less attraction for him than before. He therefore had proposed on January 13th that the Germans should reduce their troops in the occupied districts, permit a plebiscite under "guarantees" for free voting, and withdraw completely after the war. This, he thought, would satisfy the Russians, give Hoffmann the strategic guarantees he needed in the East, give the Hapsburgs a chance to secure Poland through a plebiscite, and, lastly, open up the Ukraine for food. This astute plan, however, was cold-shouldered by all parties at Brest. The Soviet delegates would not have it, because they had no confidence in any "guarantees" for free voting, which Count Czernin might obtain. The Prussian generals refused it, because it would have meant the abandonment of the Reval-Odessa line and of possible "independent" republics further east. The delegates of the Ukrainian Rada refused it, because there were certain areas in the occupied zone which they claimed for the Ukraine, particularly in the Cholm and parts of Brest-Litovsk provinces, and they were not going to allow either Prussians, Russians or Austrians to "self-determine" those areas. Poor "self-determination of nationalities"! It worried the Conference of Brest-Litovsk like the skeleton at the feast. There were, of course, no nationalities strictly speaking to "self-determine," but only classes within national areas, each claiming to speak for the nation.

I shall not easily forget the evening of the 17th in Petrograd.

For days we had been straining our ears for even the faintest sound of response to the appeals of the Russian Revolution. At last news came that a big strike movement had broken out in Austria-Hungary, and that the workers of Vienna and Budapest were demanding bread and peace. An indescribable wave of enthusiasm swept over the working classes in the city. In the Petrograd Soviet I found it the sole subject of conversation. "We were right, after all," I heard it said; "our delegates at Brest need not have been so chicken-hearted. Our radio messages have been heard in Austria. Perhaps they will be heard in Germany also." And, indeed, faint signs of revolt were beginning to appear even among the German soldiers. Members of the Soviet delegation at Brest heard during these days, on more than one occasion, German soldiers singing the *International*, and received secret messages of encouragement from war-weary men in *feldgrau*. No! Hoffmann's ultimatum was getting its reply. There was still hope for the Russian Revolution and for its interpretation of "self-determination."

In the Allied countries, too, the heroic struggle of the Russian Revolution was awakening wide-spread sympathy. The network of lies, which had been woven round the activities of the Soviets by the official news bureaus and press syndicates in France and England, had not been able to conceal the fact that the Russian Revolution had taken up the glove hurled down to it by the Prussian warlords. Undaunted, it confronted them with no protection except that greatest of all weapons—the moral force of an idea. This unpleasant fact had to be faced by the Governments and public opinion of the Allied countries. A section of the English press maintained its original attitude, either not understanding or not wanting to understand the real significance of the Russian Revolution's struggle. Another section sought to exploit this spiritual revolt against the Prussian warlords in the East to Allied advantage. It was broadly hinted in these quarters that Russia would soon be back again in the ranks of the Allies, and would make no more trouble about the secret treaties. The only English daily that correctly estimated the situation was the *Manchester Guardian*, which wrote on January 15th: "The broad fact stares us in the face that in the vital question of 'no forcible annexations,' the Bolsheviks, whatever we may think of them on general grounds, have taken up an attitude as courageous as it is just, and are fighting not only their own fight but also ours. That they should have done so, that to all appearances they should be prepared to stake all on this great issue of principles, has come upon our own Govern-

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ment, as it has come upon that of Germany, as a complete surprise ; to Germany in a high degree unwelcome and disturbing, to our own a matter of no less satisfaction, unless indeed we are to suppose, as the Bolsheviki believe, and as we absolutely refuse to believe, that our Government desires in its heart that the Bolshevik effort should fail."

But these words were but the halfpennyworth of bread in the intolerable deal of sack which came from the organs of public opinion in England.

CHAPTER XIV

FIRST ATTEMPTS AT RECONSTRUCTION AND THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

WHILE these soul-stirring events were going on in the international arena, while the Russian Revolution was making its first David's struggle with the Goliath of Prussian militarism and making also its first mistakes, those who, like myself, were living in Petrograd, were experiencing all the inconveniences which come from a transition form of society. Outwardly the city was little altered. The stream of traffic went down the Nevsky as before. The bourgeoisie could be distinguished by their better dresses and expensive furs. Long rows of soldiers, awaiting demobilization, stood outside the tobacconists' shops to buy cheap tobacco from the south. Cinemas were filled. The well-to-do went to the theatres and Chaliapin sang to crowded middle-class audiences every night. The dictatorship of the proletariat was not visible on the streets at this phase of the Revolution. At the corners the newspaper boys and women sold Cadet and other bourgeois papers and journals, which were scraping up "evidence" to prove the iniquities of the Soviets, and were predicting the imminent fall of the Smolny. It was often difficult to purchase the official Soviet newspapers and the organs of the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s. The newsboys were paid by the middle-class press offices to sell only their own publications and to refuse those of the Soviet. The latter replied to the onslaughts of the Cadet publicists by occasionally sending round a couple of Red Guards to collect a fine from an editor for some particularly offensive libel. But the fine was easily paid, and the libels began again next day. For there was no lack of paper roubles. The private banks stood behind the editors' backs and Smolny had not dared put its hand on this holy of holies of the bourgeois world.

In the Government offices and public institutions also the staffs had been induced, partly by bribes from the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom," and partly

by the virtual monopoly of the private banks over the press and other channels of opinion, to strike work. The whole food control organization failed to function. Food trains arrived and were unloaded, but no directing hand took over the distribution. The food ration, which I received, began to fall day by day. First I got half a pound of bread a day, then only one-third, then a quarter, and finally one-eighth. Sugar fell to half a pound a month, and butter to a little pat no bigger than a half-crown piece. I had to go round and search in the bazaars for smoked fish and listen for news of someone who had brought a sack of flour from the country and was selling it privately. I began to find that a considerable part of my day was being spent in providing myself with the barest necessities of life. I divided my rations and other purchases day by day to be sure they would last the required time. I began to think of food, to dream of food, to think of all politics in terms of food. If only there could be peace and demobilization of the army, I used to think, the Red Guards will keep the road to the Ukraine free from Kaledin's Cossacks and Korniloff's irregulars, and our troubles in the north will be at an end. I began to realize in very practical form the Marxian theory that political psychology and ideas for the betterment of mankind have their origin in material conditions.

Visits to the working-class quarters of the Vassily Ostroff at this time showed me that the Soviets had hardly begun to make their influence felt as a constructive factor. Workmen's control over the factories existed only in paper decrees of the Smolny. In actual fact increasing numbers of engineering works were closing down, because there were no technical staffs to co-ordinate with the workshops. The private banks had induced the staffs, for financial considerations, to come out on strike, and so to throw the workmen on the streets. There was money for sabotage, but not for wages for the hand-workers. The Smolny had only a very feeble control over the food distribution apparatus, and could not guarantee to the hand-workers the means of subsistence on a coupon basis. It was clear that the coalition between the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s in the Soviet had not yet succeeded in breaking the sabotage of the intellectuals. Measures more drastic had to be devised.

The capitalist state, with its whole apparatus of suppression of the working classes, was working merrily on, in spite of all the thundering of the Smolny. Until that apparatus was smashed and something else put in its place, there could be no question of the proletarian dictatorship being realized in practice. The

North Russian proletarian revolution was now faced with this task. There were conditions in Russia which made this task particularly difficult and the transition period of the dictatorship particularly painful. A large part of the technical staffs of the great industries were either foreigners or else Russians directly in the service of foreign finance syndicates. Also there was no large native lower middle-class and high-collared proletariat, as in the western capitalist states. Therefore the small groups of the Russian intellectuals were in a position to dictate to some extent to the new rulers in the Smolny. The People's Commissars tried to make themselves independent by organizing staffs of their own, and all through December and January feverish recruiting was carried on all over the Soviet territories for engineers, banks clerks and operators of all kinds. These began to come in and to express their willingness to work for the Soviets, but they came in slowly, and it seemed probable that there were not enough.

It was clear from the first that the chief fortress of the saboteurs was the private banks. They had extracted large funds from the State Bank on the eve of the Bolshevik *coup d'état*. They were the fountains from which poured forth the streams of gold and paper notes into the pockets of the saboteurs. They held the paper bonds, which sold the natural wealth of Russia to the finance-capitalists of the Allies. If the Soviets hesitated about diverting the stream which supplied the saboteurs, if they failed to break the chain which bound the native intelligentsia to the international finance-capitalist, then indeed they were lost, and the proletarian revolution in North Russia would have been a premature experiment, merely a reminiscence to inspire movements of a later age. But the workmen of Petrograd and Moscow, with the consent of the provincial Soviets, decided that they would strike the counter-revolution in its very heart.

On December 13th I was present at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive. The Council of the People's Commissars were bringing forward for discussion a decree which provided for the nationalization of the private banks and the annulling of the foreign debt of Russia. Never before had the Soviet representatives so fateful a decision to make as now. Never before had they approached a problem with apparently so little idea of the results which their decision was going to have on the Revolution. Shortly before the sitting I met Piatakoff, the President of the State Bank. He was convinced that the two decrees would pass almost without discussion, and thus leave

time for the consideration of what seemed to him a far more important matter, the strengthening of the Red Guards for the march into the Ukraine. I asked him if he did not think there was a grave danger to the Revolution in infuriating the finance-capital of the Allies by annulling the State loans on the eve of the crisis with the Central Powers in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. There were, he said, some members of the Council of the People's Commissars who thought that it might be wise to postpone the annulling of the loans till the situation at Brest-Litovsk was cleared, and meanwhile to announce to the world that Russia would temporarily suspend payment of interest on the debt on the very adequate ground that there were no means with which to pay it. But, he said, the general view was that the annulling of the debt would be the best answer to the Allies' refusal to take part in general peace negotiations, and would wake them up to the fact that the Russian Revolution was not to be trifled with.

"But what if the Allies declare a blockade and commence open war with the Revolution—perhaps in agreement with the Central Powers?" I asked.

"First of all," replied Piatakoff, "the existing rivalry between the Imperialists of the Central Powers and the Allies is too strong to enable them to unite on a common policy against the Russian Revolution, and, secondly, I, for one, would welcome an attempt of the Allied Governments to crush us by force, as being the best means for sharpening the class struggle in Western Europe."

The sitting commenced, and, as Piatakoff predicted, the decree for the annulling of the State debt was passed almost without discussion. As I watched, I wondered if those simple soldiers and workmen realized, when they raised their hands in assent, that they were by that motion letting loose a whirlwind from Lombard Street, Wall Street and the Paris Bourse, which would sweep over the Russian plain and bring with it death, destruction and ruin. For by that motion of their hand they had touched the most sacred principle of capitalist society—the right of the holders of "scraps of paper" in Park Lane and Belgrave Square to levy material tribute on the population of economically backward countries. Curiously enough, the decree for the nationalization of the private Russian banks evoked some considerable discussion. Aviloff, the delegate from the "United Internationalists," contended that the whole step was unnecessary, that the private banks would be all bankrupt in a short time, when they had spent the sums which they had drawn from the State

Bank on the eve of the Revolution. Then why this fuss? Why this talk about occupying the private banks with troops? Why this "Red Guard nationalization"? Aviloff's arguments remained for the most part unanswered, for it was generally admitted that sooner or later the private banks would have to surrender to the State Bank, which was already working under Soviet Commissars, and would shortly be in a position to call in its credit, lent to the private banks. But there was the fear that the foreign Embassies might in the meantime come to the assistance of the private banks and prolong their life. It was unsafe to take any risks, and so the view of the Council of the People's Commissars prevailed, and the decree was passed unaltered.

On the following day the Petrograd and Moscow branches of the private banks were occupied by the Red Guards, and a Commissar put in to ensure that no funds should be taken out and hidden. This measure only partly broke the sabotage of the intellectuals. The Bank Clerks' Union, which had already received large advances in anticipation of this move, called its members out on strike. It was not possible to find the requisite number of trained accountants to keep the banks open, and consequently, for the latter part of December and for the first two weeks of January, the private banks were closed. Those who, like myself, were living on a bank balance received from abroad were thus in a sorry plight. The only way to escape starvation had been up to now to supplement the insufficient rations of the Food Commissariat by free purchases in the Alexandrofsky Bazaar or along the quays. But free prices kept on steadily rising, and no access could be had to the bank account. I had to ration the money that I already had, and cut myself down to ten roubles a day for expenditure on food and other necessities. I scrutinized the menu-card of the vegetarian restaurant, where I used to go, to find the cheapest possible fare. I ate the skins of smoked herrings, bought in the streets. As a great luxury, I occasionally allowed myself a piece of chocolate. To this state all persons in my position in Petrograd were reduced by the struggle between the Soviets and the agents of foreign finance. Not till well into January did the prospects for us begin to look a little brighter. The wells of sabotage money began to dry up, the Clerks' Union began to waver. The banks opened, and all holders of balances were allowed to draw a fixed sum per week. For, by the decrees of Smolny, the salaries of head-workers were reduced to the same level as that of the hand-workers, and those living on foreign remittances

were treated likewise. This was done at the critical moment of the suppression of the capitalist State machine. It was considered essential to reduce the executive officials of the capitalist State (the bureaucracy) to the level of the rest of the workers. When the privileges of this class had been abolished, it would then be possible to obtain a public service, which would be run in the interest of the working classes. This conquest of the private banks by the Soviets effectively broke the open sabotage of the technical staffs. The foreign agencies, too, were unable to carry on their obstruction any longer. The hand workers got their wages, and the source of revenue was cut off from those who were holding up the factories and supplying Korniloff's and Kaledin's irregulars on the Don with the cash for their war on the Northern Soviets. The latter had gained their first victory over those forces which were trying to sow anarchy in the new proletarian economic system.

The next problem—even more difficult to solve—was to co-ordinate the activities of the industrial Soviets, and factory and shop committees, to which the decree of November 16th had given the control over production. It is no exaggeration to say that during November, December and the greater part of January something approaching anarchy reigned in the industries of North Russia, and this was not removed by the breaking of the private bank sabotage. There was no common industrial plan. Factory committees had no higher authority to which to look for direction. They acted entirely on their own initiative and tried to solve those problems of production and distribution which seemed most pressing for the immediate future and for the locality. Machinery was sometimes sold in order to buy raw materials. The factories became like anarchist communes. Just as among the Red Guards irregular leadership of bands had come to the fore in this period of the Revolution, so now in industrial development anarcho-syndicalist tendencies began to run riot.

Needless to say, this phenomenon caused much embarrassment to the Marxians in the Soviets, above all to the Bolsheviks, who saw danger ahead to the whole Revolution if these elementary impulses, necessary though they may have been in the breaking-up period of capitalism, obtained free play at a time when the whole life of the community depended on common effort for a common end. For it may readily be imagined what a state of confusion was created when factory committees all over the country began to requisition trucks on the railways and to do their own banking. Although the Bolsheviks regarded

the transformation of society into one large commune, as the ultimate aim of the proletarian revolution, they held that it was necessary at this period to stop small communes within the body of society from acting independently of the rest of the people. The proletariat, they said, would have to create its own apparatus to co-ordinate the activities of the industrial syndicates—the economic Soviets. As long as capitalism was overthrown, but not yet conquered, it was essential to have an economic nerve centre of proletarian activity.

To the task of creating this new apparatus the People's Commissars now addressed themselves. One day early in January I was present at the first sitting of a body which bore the imposing name of the "Supreme Council of Public Economy." In a big stone building on the Tuchkoff embankment, in a cold room half empty of furniture, some twenty people were gathered round a table. They wore fur coats, for there was no heating, and a bitter wind was driving outside. There were five representatives from the All-Russian Trade Union Alliance, five from the factory committees' union of the northern provinces, one member of the workmen's co-operative societies, a few specialists, who were not sabotaging, from the railways and chief metal works, and a number of Bolshevik and Left S.R. Commissars from the Food and Transport Department. It was a very mixed company. The workmen from the factory unions were clearly rather at sea and waiting for someone to take the initiative. The specialists were suspicious, because they seemed to doubt the success of this great economic experiment. The driving force came solely from the Bolshevik Commissars. Prominent among these was Ossinsky, who began to explain the objects for which the People's Commissars had called this Council together. It was hoped to make it permanent. The decree on "workers' control" passed by the Third Soviet Congress on November 16th had been found to be insufficient. This decree had laid down the principle that the individual factory committees in every area, together with the local branches of the trade unions (trades councils), the local political Soviets of workers and peasants deputies, the local workers' co-operative societies and the associations of technicians, should assume responsibility for the distribution of the raw materials and for factory production, and should control the activities of all owners of businesses not yet nationalized. This, of course, was the first necessary step in the direction of breaking the monopoly power of the capitalists and the State machinery which they controlled. The second step was the nationalization of the banks, which had success-

fully broken the open sabotage of the intellectuals. But now the danger of provincialism in the ranks of the proletariat had arisen. It was necessary to co-ordinate the activities of local economic Soviets. The way had been shown by the decree of the People's Commissars for December 5th, confirmed by the Central Soviet Executive. On the strength of that decree they were sitting there that night with the object of summoning the whole productive and distributive forces of the proletariat for a common effort. It was proposed to establish contact between all those bodies which had taken part in carrying out the decree on workers' control (the factory committees, local trade union branches, workers' co-operative societies, etc.) and the Commissars, who had been appointed by the supreme political authority of the land, the Central Executive Committee. The time had come to bring about a certain measure of centralization within the economic organs of the proletarian dictatorship and to establish co-operation between them and the purely political organs. In the Supreme Council of Public Economy they hoped to find a body which would accomplish this task. For the present it was not proposed that the Council should possess more than advisory powers, for, as long as the Revolution was threatened, the last words must rest with the political Soviets.

Ossinsky's speech was on the whole favourably received, as far as general principles were concerned. Difficulties, however, were pointed out by the representatives of the factory committees. Several important bodies were not present there that evening. The Railwaymen's Union (*Vikhjel*) had not come. Its central executive was still under the influence of the Mensheviks. The large peasant co-operative societies, whose centres were in Moscow, were all Right S.R.'s and were sabotaging. How was constructive work possible without them? The representatives of the technical specialists pointed out that bodies like the Union of Zemstvos and Cities, had played an important rôle in provisioning the army under Tsarism and Kerensky and in organizing war industries. It was impossible to demobilize these industries and draw up any constructive plan without their help. Their management, however, had all gone down to the Don, where they were assisting Kaledin, and the greater part of their funds was believed to be there too.

One of the most striking things at this first sitting of the Council of Public Economy was the close co-operation between the representatives of the factory committees (shop stewards) and the representatives of the trade unions. In actual fact, it was already clear that these two workers' organizations had

begun to fuse into one, and by this action had removed one of the great hindrances to co-operation within the ranks of Labour. The trade unions, which before the March Revolution numbered a few hundred thousands in membership, had now over two million paying members. They were divided into groups according to their industries—railways, water-transport, metal workers, leather and textile workers, etc. There had never been in Russia a number of craft unions, like pattern makers and moulders, but all were organized as sub-sections of their respective industries. There was no locomotive and firemen's craft union, but these grades were in a sub-section of the great *Vikjel* which embraced all railway workers. Russian trade union development had not to be compelled to pass through the laborious process of revolutionizing the old craft unions by means of shop stewards and kindred factory organizations. Thus by the New Year 1918 these factory committees were gradually being reduced to occupying the position of local branches of the trade unions, the counterparts of trades councils in England. The special conditions which enabled this speedy transition to take place in Russia form one of the factors which differentiate the Russian Revolution from the coming changes in Western Europe. And the first sitting of the Supreme Council of Public Economy in Petrograd in January 1918 showed how quickly the Russian proletariat had passed through this stage of organization.

At the end of the first sitting of the Council of Public Economy it was decided to appoint a number of special commissions for different branches of industry. The activities of these commissions were all to be reported to the Central Soviet Executive, who retained the power of veto. Thus the proletarian dictatorship, after breaking the State machinery of capital, laid the foundation of a new State, in which there was to be no bureaucracy, no administrative caste existing apart from the legislature. Those who issued the decrees, the delegates on the political Soviets, were to see to the execution of these decrees. The People's Commissariats, appointed by them, were to supervise their administration. And the Supreme Council of Public Economy became one of these Commissariats.

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In the last days of December 1917 an internal political crisis of the first magnitude confronted the Revolution. This crisis, which had been brewing for a long time, came about over the question of the fate of the Constituent Assembly. Here indeed

was an organ which the forces of the old order could make use of to hypnotize the masses and to draw away their attention from the economic reconstructive work of the Soviets. I have already explained the circumstances under which the Constituent Assembly was elected. These were in themselves enough to prevent it from acquiring a hold over the most politically organized and conscious elements of the masses. I think, however, that what finally discredited it as an instrument of the Revolution was the fact that it came on the scene at a time when the proletariat had already found its organ of expression and activity. As long as the Russian peasantry and a part of the industrial proletariat believed that the machinery of a parliamentary democracy could serve the Revolution, could bring peace, and could liquidate the great estates and socialize key industries, as long as they were in fact under the illusions of middle-class ideology, a Constituent Assembly, elected on a geographical basis, satisfied their aspirations. But Kerensky did not call the Constituent Assembly during the summer of 1917, and the powers that stood behind him did not permit the elections until the masses had already begun to use direct action for political purposes through their industrial Soviets. No doubt, if the Constituent Assembly had been called earlier in the year, it would have acquired sufficient prestige to have made the process by which the Soviets became the sole directing force in the Revolution a much longer and more painful one than was actually the case. Even so, however, it is certain that the artificial reflection of public opinion obtained by a parliamentary election in the summer of 1917 would have failed to satisfy the demands of the masses in the autumn. Thus the Constituent Assembly under any circumstances was hardly destined to survive the first period of the Revolution.

And so it came about that on January 17th, the day on which it had been decided some weeks before that the Constituent Assembly should meet, the only question that I heard discussed in the lobbies of the Smolny was whether the Assembly should be assimilated into the Soviet system, or whether it should be summarily dismissed. The Soviets had already become the organ of the masses, who were beginning to get familiar with the idea that their industrially elected bodies alone should be the expression of the Revolution. The Constituent Assembly thus came to be the relic of an earlier period of the class struggle, which must either be brought into line with the new orientation, or else be removed altogether. Therefore it was proposed at a sitting of the Council of the People's Commissars on January 15th

to do something similar to what was done in the French Revolution after the expulsion of the Girondists—namely, to create a "Convention of the Left." A Third Soviet Congress was being at the time elected throughout the length and breadth of North, Centre and East Russia to meet Trotsky, when he came back from Brest-Litovsk, and to decide upon the reply of the Revolution to the ultimatum of the Central Powers. It was, therefore, a good opportunity to offer the Constituent Assembly the chance of joining this Congress and of forming a big convention. As a preliminary, of course, the Constituent Assembly was to be asked to accept certain basic principles for the constitution of the Russian Republic. The People's Commissars now proposed to lay before the Central Soviet Executive a decree, called the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People, and, if this decree was accepted, to present it to the Constituent Assembly as the basis of the latter's admission into the new Convention, in which the delegates to the Third Soviet Congress should also take part. This Declaration laid down that the fundamental principle of the Constitution of the Russian Republic should be the recognition that supreme authority in the land should rest with federations of industrial councils, in which only those who did not employ human labour should take part. "Since," read the decree in Section IV, "the Constituent Assembly was elected on the basis of lists drawn up before the November Revolution, that is before the people had risen against the exploiters, and at a time when the masses did not know the strength of the propertied classes and the establishment of a socialistic form of society was not yet thought possible, the Constituent Assembly hereby recognizes that it has no right to withstand the authority of the Soviets. . . . By supporting the Soviet system and the decrees of its Government, the Constituent Assembly recognizes that its task is confined to co-operation in the working out of the basis of the socialist form of society."

This declaration was approved by the Central Soviet Executive at its sitting on January 16th, and all that now remained to be done was to present it to the Constituent Assembly for its acceptance, and to invite its participation in the coming Third Soviet Congress. Of course, the party which had obtained the majority in the Assembly, the Right Socialist Revolutionaries, and all the elements that stood behind them and which gathered round the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom," and all the influences that came from foreign finance and the Allied Embassies and Missions, beat the alarm

at this proposal of the Soviets. Every attempt was made to mobilize the wavering lower middle-class elements of Petrograd and Moscow against the Smolny. A bitter campaign was started in the Cadet press, which still was allowed to say very much what it liked, and great sums of money were expended in printing literature in defence of "constitutional and democratic rights." It seemed, on the evening of the 17th, as I looked in at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, as if the campaign was having some success, if one was to judge by the nervousness of the Bolshevik and Left S.R. Commissars. Machine-guns had been posted in the Commissariats, and the members of both parties were mobilized in case of disorder on the following day. For it was rumoured that the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" had won over the not yet demobilized units of the Semeonoff Regiment of the Petrograd garrison.

On the following day I found that the entrance of Spalernaya Street, that is, the point barring the approach to the Taurida Palace, where the Constituent Assembly was to meet, was barricaded by Red Guards with machine-guns. No one could get into the Palace without a pass. The atmosphere was so electric that, while waiting for the Assembly to open in the lobbies of the Palace, everyone jumped when they heard a door bang, thinking that the Semeonoff Regiment had commenced a bombardment of the Smolny. But the folks in the Smolny were quite unmoved by the general panic, which had been sown in the city by these reports, and towards ten o'clock I met a member of the Central Soviet Executive, who told me that the Semeonoff Regiment had just sent a deputation to the People's Commissars to say that there was no truth in the rumours, and that they would stand by the decisions of the Soviet.

About two o'clock the Assembly opened. On the right and in the centre sat the Right S.R.'s, who, with the small Cadet party, held the majority. They were mostly old party officials, who in their day had fought and suffered in the struggle against Tsarism. Now they were sitting there, attempting to hold back those very forces which in the days of their revolutionary ardour they had called into being. As I looked upon them I was reminded of the words: "The Revolution devours her children." For on the left were the ranks of the Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s, a formidable minority of some 40 per cent. of all the Deputies. They were for the most part young men, either workmen from the factories or soldiers from the Red Guard. Among the Left S.R.'s were to be seen the faces of the young generation of the peasants and a number of long-haired intellectuals. There

could be no doubt that on this side was the youth and energy. True, it often surpassed the bounds of moderation, for in the proceedings which followed the shouting and stamping came for the most part from this quarter.

An ebullition of animal spirits came from the left when the leader of the Bolsheviks got up and proposed the revolutionary heroine Marie Spiridonova as President of the Assembly. But the Right S.R.'s put up their leader, Victor Tchernoff, the erstwhile member of the Zimmerwald Conference, and now the compromised negotiator of agreements between the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" and Dukhonin's General Staff at Mogilieff. He rose to address the Assembly in a carefully worded speech, which, without saying anything offensive against the Soviets, avoided saying anything to show that he recognized their existence. Apparently, he followed the tactics of taking the wind out of the Soviet's sails, at any rate in the question of peace. "The Constituent Assembly," he said, "should propose to the democratic parties the immediate commencement of peace negotiations on the basis of the Russian revolutionary programme." But the public mind was sufficiently critical now to demand some record of real work done in the interests of the Revolution, as a guarantee for what was going to be done in the future. And in this respect Tchernoff's record was not very satisfactory. "The Constituent Assembly," continued Tchernoff, "should unite all the labouring masses in Russia and let civil war cease from this day." Whereupon there were howls from the left, "While you help Kaledin," and "What about Mogilieff?" "Let the land go to the peasantry," he continued, "and let the democratically elected Zemstvos distribute the land according to local needs. We shall reach Socialism only by slow stages through gradual economic development, giving equality of opportunity for all."

Thereupon the President of the All-Russian Central Soviet Executive, Sverdloff, rose upon the tribune, and in clear tones read out in the name of the Executive the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples.* "We ask you to accept this," he said after he had read it, "as the basis on which you can enter the coming Convention with the Third Soviet Congress. By so doing the Constituent Assembly will be able to assist the work of building up the Socialist Republic of Russia. We have already taken steps towards international peace between the workers of all lands, while you have been spending months in betraying the Revolution to the Cadets. Therefore the only

* For the text of this Declaration see Appendix.

authority that can have the confidence of the proletariat and of the peasants is that of the Soviets, and the Constituent Assembly can only serve the Revolution if it recognizes the proletarian dictatorship and the removal of the propertied classes from political rights."

Then up rose Tseretelli to speak for the Mensheviks, whose party had now shrunk to a handful of members. How different had been Tseretelli's position when he led the Block of the "Revolutionary Democracy" in the First Soviet Congress! Othello's occupation had indeed gone. Yet in this last public speech that I heard from him, in this swan-song apology for the history of the previous eight months, Tseretelli was the same as ever—thoughtful, unemotional, philosophic, calm, like some Zeus from Olympus, contemplating the conflicts of the lesser gods. "The Constituent Assembly," he said, "elected democratically by the whole country, should be the highest authority in the land. If this is so, then why should an ultimatum be sent to it by the Central Soviet Executive? Such an ultimatum can only mean the intensification of civil war. Will this help to realize Socialism? On the contrary, it will only assist the German militarists to divide the revolutionary front. The break-up of the Constituent Assembly will only serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, whom you (the Bolsheviks) profess to be fighting. The Assembly alone can save the Revolution." And with these words Tseretelli finished his career as a leader of the Russian Revolution. From this time on he retired to his fair Caucasian native land, and in leading its local middle-class revolution found a task more congenial to his temperament.

Shortly after midnight the Bolshevik and Left S.R. fractions proposed that the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples should be accepted as the basis of the Russian Constitution. The Right S.R. leader, on the other hand, proposed that the Declaration should be ignored, and that the Assembly should proceed to elect commissions for drawing up peace proposals to the Allies and Central Powers and for settling the land on the peasants. The very work which the Soviet had already been forced to take in hand was now at last to be commenced by the Constituent Assembly, when it was too late. The Bolshevik and Left S.R. fractions thereupon got up and left the Assembly, and shortly after the sailor Commandant of the Taurida Palace, immortalized ever since by the middle-class press of Western Europe, declared in the name of the Central Soviet Executive that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, and that those parties in it which accepted the Declaration would

sit with the delegates of the Third Soviet Congress in the Convention. Thus the Russian Constituent Assembly ended its career. It passed like a meteor across the horizon of the Russian Revolution. No one seemed prepared for its coming, and no one seemed to miss it when it was gone. With it vanished the last relics of middle-class democracy in the territories of the Soviets. The rapidity with which it disappeared was the measure of the growth of the revolutionary proletarian fighting organs pitted against it. Its short life and internal weakness were characteristic of the general condition of Russia during the transition period. But there is little to suggest that developments will be the same in Western Europe. On the contrary, in countries where the proletariat is confronted with a powerful and highly class-conscious bourgeoisie, where a labour aristocracy has been trained in a spirit of compromise, where the lower middle-class intellectuals form a large element of the population, the institutions of middle-class democracy cannot be ignored in the class struggle. The proletariat of the West is likely to have to use Parliament as a revolutionary platform for a much longer period than the Russians did in their short middle-class revolution.

CHAPTER XV

THE GREAT CONVENTION AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE IN EUROPE

THE Russian Soviets were now approaching a crisis which threatened their very existence. They would shortly be compelled to make the decision, whether they would take up the glove thrown down to them by German Imperialism, or whether they would attempt by compromise to secure a "breathing space," and, by so doing, run all the risks which this course would entail. The Bolshevik and Left S.R. press was seriously discussing these alternatives by the third week of January 1918. The peace delegates were coming home from Brest-Litovsk to meet the Great Convention, or Third Soviet Congress, which was summoned to lay down the constitutional basis of the Republic, and to decide these momentous issues of peace and war. In their ears was ringing General Hoffmann's ultimatum. They had now to explain to the Convention the international situation in its true light, and to ask their decision on the question—a separate peace or an "unfortunate peace"?

The Convention, as I explained in the last chapter, was summoned by the Executive appointed by the Second Soviet Congress, and was to include not only the delegates from the provincial Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Soviets, but also the Constituent Assembly, elected on the geographical franchise, if the latter would recognize that the final authority in the Revolution rested with industrial councils of citizens, not exploiting the labour of others. It is generally assumed that the Constituent Assembly was rudely brushed aside and refused participation in the work of the Convention. This is contrary to the facts, as I, who was present at Petrograd during these days, can testify. The Constituent Assembly was duly invited to take part in the Convention, and on the question of the answer to this invitation the Assembly split. The Bolshevik and Left S.R. members of the Assembly agreed to join with the Soviet delegates to the new Congress and form together the Convention. The Right

S.R. and Menshevik members, like modern Girondists, however, refused, and were thus excluded.

It was a great and memorable assembly that I witnessed in the halls of the Taurida Palace on January 23rd—a striking contrast to the scenes on the previous Friday, when the Constituent Assembly had opened its brief career. My own impression of the first day of the Convention is conveyed in the following passage of a despatch which I sent to the *Manchester Guardian* on January 26th: "Instead of an atmosphere of suspicion between two political factions, representing class groups under one roof, there is in this Convention the enthusiasm born of a revolutionary spirit and rising from deep down in the labouring masses of Russia. The Convention does not, of course, represent all Russia, nor does it even pretend to do so, as the Constituent Assembly did. The ruined and embittered middle classes, the intelligentsia, still controlling much technical skill, and the peasantry of the politically backward eastern provinces, are not represented here. But if the Convention does not represent all, it at least represents the most active and virile elements of revolutionary Russia. Here are the delegates from the urban industrial centres; here are members of the poor and middle-class peasant elements of the northern and central provinces; here also are representatives of the land-hungry peasants and immigrants of the south-east. Even the proletarian elements among the Cossacks have succeeded in breaking through the iron ring forged by the Ukrainian Rada, and Generals Kaledin and Alexeieff on the Don, and have found their way here to this cold and hungry north, this Mecca of a new hope. To regard the Convention as representative of all Russia would be a mistake, because no assembly in these days can exist containing two social elements at war. But not to recognize it as the greatest force in Russia to-day would be a far greater mistake and one fraught with the gravest consequences for the relations between Russia and Western Europe."

The first day of the Convention was taken up with addresses of welcome from delegates from all parts of Russia and from abroad. Left Socialist delegates from Scandinavia, Finland, Rumania and America spoke. A representative of the underground Soviets, which existed in the Ukraine and were working against the Rada, was received with great enthusiasm. Trotsky, fresh from Brest-Litovsk, received a great ovation, as he appeared and said that the People's Commissars looked only to the Convention for the true expression of the will of the Russian labouring masses. After this the Convention was

postponed till the 26th to give the peasants' delegates from some of the remote districts time to arrive, and so to bring the grand total of delegates up to 1,200.

In the intervening two days the food crisis in the city became exceedingly acute. Only a very few wagons of flour had arrived during the week at the Petrograd railway stations. The Commandant of the Taurida Palace had difficulties even in getting sufficient food to supply the delegates to the Convention. My bread rations were reduced to one-eighth of a pound of bread a day. The banks were not opened to remittances from abroad by order of the Commissar of Finance, for fear that the Allied Missions would thereby be enabled to give material assistance to Kaledin and Korniloff. I was reduced to my last few hundred roubles, which I had drawn out before the *coup d'état*, and which I now rationed out at the rate of five roubles per day. With these I bought every other day a few smoked sardines to quell the pangs of hunger, which soon came on after I had consumed my meagre daily bread ration. Cold, weak and hungry indeed I was when, on January 26th, I crawled up to the Taurida Palace to hear the great debate on the second day of the Convention on the momentous question of the hour—the answer to the German ultimatum. How fervently I hoped, under the pressure of cold and hunger, that the workers of Western Europe would listen to the bitter cry of the Russian Revolution in distress.

The great speech of the evening was made by Trotsky, whose report on the negotiations with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk was listened to with rapt attention. All eyes were upon him, for he was at the zenith of his influence. A Cicero in the art of declamation, he had become the man who incorporated the revolutionary will of Russia, speaking to the outer world.

"The Allied Imperialists accuse us," he said in tones of biting sarcasm, "of being the agents of Germany. German Imperialists accuse us of being the agents of the Allies. The combined accusations, neutralizing each other, prove the hypocrisy of both and our honesty. Hindenburg knows he cannot break the west front, and so he hopes to strengthen the Prussian oligarchy at the expense of revolutionary Russia. We have disclosed to our German-Austrian comrades the cynicism of their Governments, which treacherously pretend to accept peace without annexations. Their representatives on the second day of the negotiations refused to agree to the evacuation of the occupied provinces till after the war. On being asked whether they would agree to give an undertaking to submit the question

of the evacuation of German troops and the future government of the border provinces to an assembly of the natives, they declined to give any such undertaking. Their psychology is such that they think: 'Since Russia wants peace at any price, and we want peace at the cost of Russia, the more we demand, the more we get.' This is not a national or territorial struggle, but a class struggle, for the Prussian oligarchy wants to save the German aristocracy of the Baltic provinces from ruin at the hands of the Russian Revolution. Also the German heavy industry interests want to exploit new spheres of influence in the East. Equally cynical and hypocritical are the Allied Imperialists, who seem ready to agree to a compromise and to an annexationist peace at the expense of Russia. The Ukrainian Rada is now trying to make a separate peace over the heads of the Ukrainian Soviets. And yet the Allies pretend to believe that the Rada will save Russia from a disgraceful peace. We have replied by repudiating Russia's debts to England and France. We have seized the gold deposits of the Rumanian Government in Moscow and handed the Rumanian Minister his passports. But we know also that we are not alone. In spite of the censorship, the news of our revolutionary struggle has filtered through into Austria, where the fire of revolt is already smouldering. As for ourselves, we will never sign a disgraceful peace with the German tyrants, but will carry on a Socialist war against all our class enemies. If we believe in the International of the Workers, let us join the revolutionary Red Guards to defend the toiling masses of Russia from the European exploiters."*

When Trotsky had ended his great speech, the immense assembly of Russian workmen, soldiers and peasants rose and, as if at a great religious gathering, solemnly sang the *International*. This great outburst, as spontaneous as it was soul-stirring for those who, like the writer, witnessed it, was a standing proof that the ideals, inspiring the Great Russian Revolution with the force of a new religion, came not from the intellectual's studio nor from the middle-class drawing-rooms, but from factory, workshop and the poorest peasant's log cabin over the length and breadth of the Russian plain.

It could clearly be seen from his speech that Trotsky favoured the idea that the Revolution should reply to the ultimatum of the German Imperialists by a military defensive and a propaganda offensive. His handling of the border State and Ukrainian problems at Brest-Litovsk had brought him into a

* Quoted in my cable to *Manchester Guardian*, January 31, 1918.

position in which, whether he liked it or not, he must resist the Central Powers' pretensions to these parts of Russia, and give a somewhat free hand to the leaders of the Red Guards, who were marching south and south-west with the banner of the social revolution. At the same time he was seeking, without letting it be widely known, a way out, in case the Prussian generals should drive him to bay. As regards this side of his foreign policy, he was assisted by a certain element among the Bolshevik delegates at the Convention, who inclined to the idea that it was dangerous to play with Prussian militarism, and that it was better for the Revolution to submit to a superior force, provided that the Socialists and Labour in the West were first given proofs that further resistance on the part of Russia was out of the question. It was rumoured in the lobbies of the Taurida Palace throughout these days that Lenin was decidedly of the opinion that delay would be dangerous and that the Revolution should agree with the enemy while he was in the gates. Lenin was conspicuous by his reticence at the Convention. After an address of welcome from him on behalf of the Council of the People's Commissars, I do not remember seeing him at all. He seems to have thought that, as long as the revolutionary enthusiasm of the delegates from the masses was still on the rise, it would be disastrous to damp it down with a cold *douche* of *Realpolitik*. Trotsky thus remained in the centre of the limelight. Outwardly, at least, he became the mouthpiece of those elements both among the Left S.R.'s and among those of the Bolsheviks at the Convention, who gave out the parole: "No peace with the German militarists! Revolutionary war against world Imperialism!" For the Revolution was living on great hopes, one might almost say on delusions, in these days. The world revolution in the immediate future was indeed a possibility, if not a probability, judging by many signs of the times, and it was not unreasonable for responsible Russian revolutionaries to build their immediate policy upon the chances of its outbreak. If the hopes were not justified, they could always have recourse to *Realpolitik*. This view was expressed by numerous delegates from the provinces. They spoke in favour of a refusal to accept the Prussian generals' ultimatum. For some hours the Convention broke up into its party fractions. There were only two parties that counted, and they were the parties whose members sat in the People's Commissariat—the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s. The Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s had sent a few delegates, elected from the eastern provinces for purposes of their own information.

They were a small group of less than fifty delegates, and took no part in the proceedings. There was no difference of opinion among the Government parties on the immediate question at issue on this night, and it was soon possible to draw up a joint resolution, which laid down the principle that the Russian Revolution "would never willingly sign an unfortunate and Imperialist peace, and would prepare to defend itself against the exploiters of all lands." This formula reconciled those who would fight to the last gasp and those who would adapt policy to the bases of material strength. It was rumoured at this time that, when Lenin heard of the general agreement on this resolution, he said: "I am afraid this piece of altruism will cost us Pskoff."¹ Then, for good or for evil, the delegates of the Convention unanimously and solemnly accepted the resolution and quietly dispersed to their night quarters.

While Trotsky, armed with this peace and war resolution, was preparing to take his delegation back to Brest-Litovsk to meet the Prussian generals face to face for the last time, the Great Convention settled down to draw up the basis of the constitution of the Soviet Republic. On January 27th it met to consider the famous Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples, which had been drawn up by the Soviet Executive, and had formed the basis of negotiation between it and the abortive middle-class Constituent Assembly. The President of the Convention read the Declaration, after which the delegates retired into their party meetings to consider the phrasing of certain passages. The Declaration, which was to provide the basis for the constitution of the Soviet Republic, was divided into four articles. The first article declared Russia to be a Republic of industrial councils of workmen, soldiers and peasants, who through these councils possessed the absolute authority in the land. It also declared that Russia was an "alliance of nations and a federation of national republics." There was some discussion about the wording of this article, and at a joint committee of the Bolshevik, Left S.R. and Anarchist parties, it was decided to insert the word "free" to apply to the words "alliance" and "nation." This was done in deference to the Anarchists, who, in spite of the smallness of their numbers at the Convention, undoubtedly inspired many of the ideas which came from the much larger and more unwieldy Left S.R. peasant-intellectual party. Thus the influence of anarchist ideas was clearly to be traced upon the decrees,

¹ The first really Russian town which the German armies would reach if they started to advance.

resolutions and laws of the Revolution of this period. The fear of creating an all-powerful bureaucracy, the fear that the Soviets might become part of the machinery of a centralized State, haunted the minds of many revolutionary intellectuals at this time. The revolutionary initiative from below, which had overthrown the Kerensky regime, had put an end to the rule of the big banks, and had liquidated the agrarian estates, had been manifested in the countless committees of workers and peasants which throughout the length and breadth of the land had come together without the word of command from any higher centre. Let not this revolutionary initiative be lost in a maze of bureaucratic restrictions from above! This thought could be traced in the wording of the first clause of the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples.

The same influence was also felt in Article 2, which declared the land to be "the property of the whole people," to be worked on the basis of "equal land allotments for all the working population." Here was clearly a concession to the Anarchists and Left S.R.'s, who wanted to see the utilization of the land by "free communes of workers." On the other hand, the Marxian ideas of the Bolsheviks can be read in the passage which refers to the fact that the "experimental farms and model estates are declared the property of the State." A similar compromise was effected over the passage in Article 2, referring to the socialization of industry, according to which "the transference of the means of production, transport and distribution should pass into the hands of the Workers' Republic through the control of workers' committees and through the Supreme Council of Public Economy." Here again one can see the Anarchist idea of the "free and autonomous labour unit" sandwiched in between the Marxian idea of the central council, organizing and controlling the scattered branches of the public economy.

But the rest of the articles of the Declaration passed through the party committees without any amendments or compromises. Both Marxian and Anarchist were unanimous on the need to abolish the private banks and to create a "People's Bank," to annul the loans of the Tsarist Government contracted in Europe, to tear up the secret treaties, to conduct relations with foreign lands in public, to initiate fraternization among the soldiers of the countries at war, to provide the basis of peace without annexations or indemnities, to renounce colonies, to declare the peoples of Asia free to decide their own fate, and to recognize the independence of Finland, Persia and Armenia.

On January 28th the Declaration was produced in its final form. That evening I saw the President of the Convention rise on the tribune in the Taurida Palace and read, in the presence of 1,200 Russian workmen, soldier, sailor, peasant and Cossack delegates, the Magna Charta of the Russian people. When he had finished and put the question to the Convention, a great shout of assent arose from the assembled delegates. The foundation-stone of the Constitution of the Russian Soviet Republic had been laid—a new social order had appeared in the European constellation.

Indeed, the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples is a new milestone on the road of history. Just as the Declaration of Independence of the United States and the Declaration of the Rights of Man in the French Revolution marked the fall of feudalism and the arrival of the new era of middle-class domination of society, so did the Declaration passed by the Great Convention of the Russian Revolution in January 1918 send out a challenge to the rule of the propertied classes of Europe, who had for over a century held power on the ruins of feudalism and of the divine right of kings. For, as Kropotkin shows,¹ the Declaration of the Rights of Man, drawn up by the Constituent Assembly in Paris, "kept out all allusions to the economic relations between citizens, and confined itself to affirming the equality of all before the law, the right of the nation to give itself whatever government it wished, and the constitutional liberties of the individual." But it failed to restrict the power of wealth and private property. Indeed, it laid the foundations of the unbridled dictatorship of the middle classes. It allowed that "social distinctions might be established by law in the interest of the community, and by means of that fiction the door was opened to all inequalities."

Not so the Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited Peoples. While a part of it (that part referring to the World War and the foundation of an international peace and the right of self-determination of peoples) bears great resemblance to passages in the Declaration of the French Revolution, the rest of it is concerned with abolishing root and branch the system of private wealth and property. The principle is laid down that there can be no political freedom for the citizen unless there is first industrial and economic freedom. This principle, which is so conspicuous by its absence in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man, is elaborated to the full in this Declaration of the Russian Convention. It is embodied in the

¹ *The Great French Revolution*, chapter xix., pp. 141-145.

article which establishes the sole political power in the hands of industrial councils, and which deprives the geographically elected assemblies of their authority. It is embodied in the clause which abolishes private property in land without compensation and in the forecast which it makes of the new republic of labour after the final overthrow of the political and industrial power of the middle classes.

On January 28th Trotsky and his peace delegation left for Brest-Litovsk, and the Great Convention broke up into a number of commissions, which had before them the task of working out in detail the decrees arising out of the principles laid down by the Declaration. On the 29th great news arrived. The wireless reported the outbreak of a giant strike in Berlin and mass demonstrations against the war and the high cost of living in the fortress of Prussian militarism. The effect on the mass psychology in Petrograd was instantaneous. It could be seen on the streets. It was the only subject of conversation at the Smolny. "At last the appeals of the Russian Revolution to the international solidarity of the workers have been heard"; these were the words on everyone's lips. Even the bitterest anti-Bolsheviks among the middle classes and the saboteurs were silent, or, if they said anything, admitted that the Russian Revolution had gained a great moral victory by the mere fact that it had called forth a protest movement in the capital city of the warlords. Those who had been feeding themselves on the stories that the Bolsheviks were the agents of the German General Staff began to look rather silly.

But the news of the Berlin strikes was less optimistically regarded in responsible circles round the People's Commissars and by the party leaders of the Convention in the Taurida Palace. It was understood in these quarters that the strikes were the work of the German Spartakusbund (the illegal left wing of the Independent Socialists, which subsequently became the German Communist Party) and the *Revolutionäre Obleute* (or local shop-stewards' committees). The exceedingly conspirative nature of the work of these bodies made it doubtful if they would be able to dispel the indifference of the masses, who were cowed under the military dictatorship. On the other hand, a failure of the strike movement would be more dangerous to the Russian Revolution than no strike at all, for then General Hoffmann would have a pretext to march on Moscow and Petrograd. He would probably attempt to do so as soon as he could be sure that the revolutionary movement in Germany was not dangerous, and that his army would obey the order to advance. All these

possibilities were seriously discussed by the Council of the People's Commissars on the 29th, and it was generally agreed that, while the Revolution was justified in marking time and postponing its answer to Hoffmann's ultimatum, pending the development of the Berlin strike, it was nevertheless necessary to be prepared for the worst. For the Prussian generals knew that the small department in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, which printed the *Fakel* and distributed revolutionary leaflets among the German soldiers on the east front, was run by the same type of men who led the illegal Spartakusbund and the *Revolutionaere Obleute*.

On the 31st we heard that Trotsky had arrived at Brest-Litovsk. He had been met before he crossed the front into the German lines by a delegation from the Ukrainian Soviet Government, which had been set up during the previous week in the industrial districts of Kharkoff and Ekaterinoslav in opposition to the Ukrainian Rada. It was agreed that they should accompany Trotsky to Brest, where they should take part in the negotiations in the name of the independent Soviet Ukraine. Meanwhile the advance of the Red Guards into the Ukraine had begun. This definitely committed Trotsky to a policy of repudiating the claims of the Rada to participation in the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. It was clear that social ferment was spreading also in the West Ukraine. A soldier delegate from the southwest front told me in the Smolny in these days that the rank and file of the old army in those regions was divided in allegiance, some declaring for the Rada and some for the Ukrainian Soviet in Kharkoff. The peasants also had already in many parts seized and anarchically divided up the great estates in the Ukraine. In fact, Trotsky now had a better groundwork for his foreign policy in attacking the Central Powers and the Rada than he had when he was last in Brest-Litovsk. He could show the Central Powers that the Rada did not represent the last word of a "self-determined" Ukraine. There was a chance for his interpretation of "self-determination" after all. But everything depended upon the success of the revolutionary movement in Germany.

For the next five days we heard nothing definite from Brest-Litovsk. Trotsky and Hoffmann were standing like two lions facing each other, as if preparing for the final spring. The difference between them was that Hoffmann intended to spring, but Trotsky knew that he could not, and had to rely on the ally in the rear of his enemy. But in the meantime excitement came from a new quarter. On February 7th news arrived that

a Red Revolution had broken out in Finland; the workers' committees in the southern Finnish industrial centres had taken power and formed a Government resting upon industrial councils. The middle-class Government had retired to North Finland, where it was relying on the well-to-do peasantry of these regions. On the same day a special Commissioner came from Helsingfors from the revolutionary Government to establish contact with the Russian Soviets. The Commissioner was none other than the Socialist Deputy of the dissolved Diet, Tokoi, with whom I had discussed the question of Finnish independence under the Kerensky coalition in the previous summer, when I had been in Helsingfors. He had said at that time that, as long as the old bureaucracy of Tsarism remained, it was necessary for the border States to aim at absolute independence. Now, however, a complete social revolution had come in Russia, and the whole power rested on another basis. This would enable the proletarian and lower middle classes in the border States, and certainly in Finland, to enter some sort of federation with Soviet Russia. Indeed, he added, they would be compelled to do so, if they intended to realize Socialism, for they would probably be blockaded by the capitalist Powers of the West and cut off from overseas sources of supply. In fact, one of the chief objects of his mission was to secure food from Russia for the aid of the Finnish Revolution. In this way he hoped that the real independence of Finland would only mean closer relations with the sister Workers' Republic of Russia. He was against the active support of the Russian Red Guards in the Finnish Revolution, since this was only likely to alienate the nationalistically inclined lower middle classes.

All these events in the Ukraine, Finland, Austria and Germany evoked tremendous enthusiasm throughout the towns and large villages of North Russia. I kept on meeting in the Smolny delegates from all over the country, who seemed under the impression that the world revolution was indeed on the point of breaking out. Everyone, including myself, felt that we would gladly continue to hunger and freeze for weeks longer if only the Powers of the West would recognize the Russian Revolution as an accomplished fact and allow its peaceful development. But the plight of many foreigners in Petrograd was at this time desperate. I had spent the last lot of roubles that I had, and now could only live on the starvation rations of the Food Commissariat—one-eighth of a pound of bread a day and potato skins! I had lost one and a half stone in weight in three weeks, and started with fright when I looked at myself

in the glass. The last hope of getting a remittance from England via Helsingfors was gone as the result of the social revolution in Finland. In these tremendous days I certainly learned to eschew worldly things and feed on ideals in the hope that moral enthusiasm might somehow sustain the drooping body.

Meanwhile the Red Guards went on from victory to victory. During the first week in February news came that Orenburg had been taken, and that Dutoff, the counter-revolutionary leader of Cossack bands, had fled into the steppes. Direct connection was thus re-established with the Soviet forces in Turkestan. Meanwhile the civil war was developing in the south. The Red Guards, in spite of their scratch composition, had succeeded in driving a wedge between the forces of Kaledin's Cossacks on the Don and those of the Rada in the Ukraine. They were able to achieve this largely because in the ranks of the counter-revolution there was no cohesion or common plan, and because continual revolts were breaking out in the rear of the anti-Soviet forces. On February 4th the Red Guards reached the suburbs of Kieff, and, although they were unable to enter, on account of reinforcements, which came to the assistance of the Rada, the latter was morally weakened in Brest-Litovsk. Nearly 100,000 Red Guards, the kernel of which were Bolshevik sailors from the Baltic Fleet, were advancing on the Don against Kaledin, who was thereby isolated and prevented from sending assistance to the Rada. Within the ranks of the south-eastern Alliance differences of opinion were breaking out. The North Caucasus Cossacks had already broken away from the Alliance, fearing that the open counter-revolution was triumphing. In the Council of Don Cossacks, a party led by General Alexicoff and the Great Russian Cadets, who had taken refuge in Novo-Tcherkask, demanded an All-Russian policy and the mobilization of an army to advance against the Northern Soviets. On the other hand, General Kaledin, seeing the danger of alienating the rank and file Cossacks and of driving them into the arms of the Bolsheviks, insisted upon a purely local policy, which would aim at keeping the Don free from Soviets, and would trust to time to solve the problem of North Russia in a sense favourable to the counter-revolution. Cossack delegates, from revolutionary Cossack regiments who came to the Smolny in these days, told me that the ferment among the Cossacks had grown during the last month, and that the atmosphere in the Cossack *stanitzas* was very different from what it was when I had been in them in the previous autumn. Now families were divided among themselves. The fathers

and uncles often supported Kaledin and saddled their horses to go off to fight for him, while the younger sons for the most part stole off at night with rifles on their backs and made their way stealthily to the lines of the Red Guards. The publication of the decree of the People's Commissars on December 12th, abolishing the obligation of the Cossack cultivator to perform military service under the officer caste, and to provide a horse and rifle for the purpose, had had a tremendous effect in the *stanitzas*.

On February 8th it was announced in the Smolny that the Red Guards had entered Kieff. The enthusiasm created by this news in the lobbies of the Taurida Palace, where the delegates of the Great Convention were sitting in their special commissions, knew no bounds. It was thought that this was the beginning of the end of the Rada. But no one seemed to see that this triumph of the Russian Revolution contained the seeds of a terrible danger. Rumours had already been going about for some days that the Rada, which Trotsky, from the moment of his arrival at Brest-Litovsk, had refused to recognize as speaking for the Ukraine, was negotiating a separate peace with the Central Powers. Driven from the East and from a part of the West Ukraine by the town workers and by the wage-earning people of the villages, the middle-class and rich farmer element, which controlled the Rada, decided to summon outside aid. The fact that they had received arms and financial aid from the French Military Mission in Russia to fight the Germans did not trouble their consciences. If the Prussian warlords would help them to defeat the Red Guards in the Ukraine, they were ready to make a separate peace with Berlin, and to throw London and Paris overboard. A delegate from the Ukrainian Social Democrats described to me some weeks later the sitting of the Rada in which it was decided to call in the aid of the Central Powers. The Foreign Minister, a student of twenty-one, explained that the Ukrainian delegation in Brest-Litovsk had already secured in Berlin the recognition of the chief territorial claims of the Ukraine. The Social Democratic left wing of the Rada thereupon raised a great uproar, demanding the reason why this step had been taken by the Ministers without consulting the party fractions. Furthermore the Social Democrats asked what guarantees the Central Powers had given that they would in fact respect the integrity and independence of the Ukraine. Whereupon the sallow youth of twenty-one replied that he had personally been assured by the aide-de-camp of General Hoffmann that the German Empire would respect their independ-

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ence! Shortly after this a great part of the Social Democrats left the Rada, which then became little more than a committee for registering the orders of the German General Staff in the East. But General Hoffmann had gained his objective. He had captured the Rada, which he could now use against the North Russian Soviets, and force the latter to recognize his interpretation of "self-determination." Everything now depended on the strike in Berlin, for it was clear that only the pressure of the revolutionary movement in Germany would hold back the hand of Hoffmann. How eagerly we scanned the wireless telegrams during those evenings for news of the strike. For the Berlin workmen held the key to the situation now.

CHAPTER XVI

BREST-LITOVSK

FEBRUARY 8th was a black day for those who wished well to the Russian Revolution, for on this day it was clear that the Berlin strike had broken down. The strikers had gone back to work, after having been bought off with a higher bread ration. An extraordinary state of siege had been declared, and that had broken the spirit of those who were inclined to follow on the first days the parole of the Spartakusbund of the Independents. Never was the need of international solidarity among the workers of all lands so urgent as in this supreme crisis. Never had so great an opportunity presented itself to the German workers. Their failure, of course, exposed the weakness of the working-class movement in Germany, which, in contrast with that of Russia, had to contend with the obstacles of a reactionary and patriotic trade union bureaucracy.

Following upon this came the news that the Ukrainian Rada's representatives at Brest-Litovsk had concluded and signed a separate peace with the Central Powers without even the knowledge of the Russian and Ukrainian Soviet delegates. General Hoffmann had, indeed, used his interpretation of "self-determination" to the advantage of the German General Staff's war aims, for he had, while concluding peace with the Rada, refused to recognize the Ukrainian Soviet delegates. Count Czernin also played a good second to him, for, as he admits in his Memoirs,¹ his object as chairman of the committee on territorial questions was to play off the representatives of the Rada against the Soviet delegates.

The Russian Revolution was now at bay. The eyes, not only of all Russia, but of the whole world were on Trotsky, armed as he was by the Convention with full powers to act in the name of the Revolution. February 10th was the decisive day. All the members of the Peace Conference were assembled. There were the Prussian generals with their chests blazing with

¹ *In the World War*, p. 245.

medals and crosses, the Austrian officers and diplomats, less Spartan in their looks, but ready to play at any moment the rôle of the kissing Judas to the Russian Revolution. The Bulgarian delegates, who had forgotten for the moment the memories of Plevna and the Shipka, were sitting side by side with their former enemies, the Turks, who in their turn were thinking only of what conquests they could make in Central Asia at the expense of the Russian Revolution. Vultures at the feast they were indeed. But were they sure that the body of Russia was dead ?

Calmly Trotsky rose to communicate the decision of the North Russian and Ukrainian Soviet Governments on the ultimatum of Hoffmann, demanding the recognition of the annexation of Poland, Lithuania and Courland by the Central Powers, and the self-determination of the Ukraine under the shadow of Prussian bayonets. Of material force to protest against this demand he had none. All the information which came to him was to the effect that three-quarters of the Russian soldiers had gone home, that over large stretches of the front the trenches were empty, that the artillerymen had sold many of their guns and stores to the enemy and were dividing the spoils in the nearest town behind the front, in spite of the protests of the Soviet Commissars, who in these matters were as helpless as the old Tsarist officers. The peasants all over the central provinces were in the midst of an orgy of land-grabbing. Landlords' mansions, the owners of which had made themselves hated by the peasants, were going up in flames, and the livestock was being driven off. The only people in the whole land at this time upon whom Trotsky could rely to present a firm front to the enemy, and who understood that something more was at stake than the mere satisfaction of a passing desire for revenge on the now helpless agents of the old regime, were the factory workers of Petrograd, Moscow and a few other large towns, the Kronstadt sailors and small sections within the ranks of the Red Guard. But these were just a drop in the ocean. The social debris of centuries was now being consumed in one gigantic holocaust and its smoke was going up to heaven. He would have been rash indeed who would have attempted to put out the flames. The old discipline in Russia had gone. The country was passing through a period of no discipline, in order to make way for the discipline to come.

And so Trotsky stood there before the Prussian warlords, having nothing wherewith to protect himself but the moral dagger of words revealing the truth. The representatives of

the Central Powers, he said, had thought that they were up against people of their own calibre. They thought they were dealing with men who would sit down in secret and sign a peace which would sacrifice the fate of millions of the toiling masses in factory and village throughout Eastern Europe. They had been deceived. The Russian Revolution had not sent them there to assist plans of conquest for the benefit of the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs, but to show up to the world the real objects of the ruling classes of Germany and Austria and of the Allied lands in waging war for the lust of conquest and for the establishment of the economic hegemony of one or other group of exploiters throughout the world. They had performed their task. They had exposed these plans, first of all by publishing the secret treaties of the Allies with Tsarism, and secondly by giving to the world the full report of the negotiations of the Russian delegates with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk. There was nothing now left for him to do but to state in the name of the Russian Revolution that he declined to put his signature to a peace of robbery and conquest which bore the stamp of oppression of the working classes. The Russian Revolution would not sign this treaty, but in order to prove to the world its peaceful desire and its sincerity, it would declare the war at an end and would demobilize its army.

A dead silence followed these words, and lasted several minutes. Eye-witnesses told me a few weeks later that even General Hoffmann lost his Potsdam parade-ground manner and gasped with astonishment at this extraordinary and memorable utterance. The rest of the delegation of the Central Powers were too nonplussed to do anything but stare in front of them. Even Herr Kühlmann could find no words. At last General Hoffmann pulled himself together and blurted out: "I take it the Russian delegates understand that this means the termination of the armistice." "We are perfectly aware what this means," calmly replied Trotsky, "and we are only interested to know how far the German soldiers will permit you to carry out your plans against us." In order to prevent a discussion on the possibility of a refusal on the part of the German soldiers to march, the diplomatic Herr Kühlmann proposed that the Conference should adjourn. In the meantime Herr Kriege, adviser on international law to Herr Kühlmann, had in his distress gone off to search in his books for precedents. Typical German professor and pedant as he was, he could think of nothing better in these moments than to go and grub about in the back numbers of history for a similar instance of refusal to make

peace or to carry on war. At last he reappeared and with a solemn face told one of the Russians that their delegation's decision could not possibly be carried out because there had never been a similar case in modern history. The last one had taken place over a thousand years ago between the Greeks and the Scythians!

While this drama was being played out in Brest-Litovsk, we in Petrograd were witnessing the closing days of the Great Convention. The commissions had for the most part done their work. The newly-formed Council of Public Economy had presented its report and had obtained the sanction of the Convention to reorganize and co-ordinate the whole apparatus of workmen's control. Another commission had in the meantime reported to the Convention on the proposed judicial system. The whole of the Tsarist and middle class legal apparatus was declared abolished. People's Courts were to be established in every district, and the judges and assessors were to be elected by the local Council of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. A central revolutionary tribunal, as a Supreme Court of Appeal, was appointed by the Convention, and was to be re-appointed by subsequent Soviet Congresses for All-Russia. Another commission was to draw up the full text of the Constitution of the Republic on the basis of the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples. This text was to be presented to the next All-Russian Soviet Congress, which was to meet not later than six months after the dissolution of the Convention, and earlier, if demanded by a majority of the provincial Soviets. In the intermediate period the Central Soviet Executive, appointed by the Convention from among its own delegates, was to carry on combined legislative and executive functions. Thus complete contact was established between the working masses and the central organs of the Soviet system. The bureaucratic caste, protecting the interests of the propertied class, was abolished. The masses were not merely, as in capitalist countries, free once every five years at a general election, but were free at any time to recall their delegates and watch over the execution of the decrees of the Revolution. On this basic principle of the Soviet Constitution both Bolshevik and Left S.R., Marxist and Anarchist could unite. The differences, which appeared between these several tendencies in the Revolution at a later date, when questions of the power of the political Soviets and of the military Commissariats in the struggle against foreign Imperialism became acute, had not yet arisen. Finally, another commission was

to draw up the text of a land law, the general principles of which had been settled by the Convention. The law was to be presented to the Central Soviet Executive for its assent. Thus, having finished its work of laying the political and economic foundation of the Soviet Republic, the Great Convention dispersed to carry the ideas of the Revolution to the remotest parts of the great plain.

On February 16th the Central Soviet Executive, formed from delegates of the Convention, assumed control at the Taurida Palace. On the same day came the disquieting news that General Hoffmann had declared the end of the armistice for the following day. According to the terms of the armistice, seven days' notice was to have been given. Hoffmann, however, as if in revenge for Trotsky's speech, dated the seven days from the 10th. This left only two days before the German General Staff would put their armies in motion against the Revolution. The bitterness against the treachery and brutality of the Prussian militarists now knew no bounds. In the lobbies of the Taurida Palace everyone's hope was laid on the rank and file of the German army. Would the German soldiers march? The German generals had declared war on the Russian Revolution, which was now replying with the only weapon ready at hand—the dissemination of the truth. It had appealed to all the world, but the military censors had withheld the truth from the masses in Western and Central Europe. Its only hope now was in the German *feldgrau*. During the nights of February 15th and 16th the propaganda department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs worked at double pressure. German leaflets and copies of the newspaper *Fakel* were printed and despatched in large numbers to the front for dissemination in the German trenches. It was a forlorn hope, but in this critical hour every means had to be employed to parry what appeared to be an international conspiracy against the Russian Revolution.

On February 18th we had known the worst. The order had been given to the German troops on the northern front to advance. Specially selected battalions had attacked the remnants of the old Russian army, which offered no resistance. Dvinsk had been occupied by the Germans and vast stores and booty taken. Prince Leopold of Bavaria had issued a message to the German troops, explaining to them that they were advancing to "cleanse Russia, which was sick and suffering from Bolshevism and Red Terror." Reports came to Petrograd in the course of the day that some German troops in the Kovno region had refused to obey the order to advance. But this

subsequently proved to be the mutiny of a regiment which had been ordered to the French front and had declined to entrain. It was thus clear that, as far as revolutionary spirit among the German troops on the east front was concerned, it only took the form of a certain degree of war-weariness. As long as the German "Michel" could get enough food and warmth, and had not to undergo hard fighting, he was not going to risk disobeying his officers. The last hope was thus gone. The Russian Revolution lay helplessly at the feet of the Prussian warlords. And, as if to add the Judas kiss to this great tragedy, the treacherous Ukrainian Rada, which had just signed a separate peace with the Central Powers, now issued an appeal to the peoples of Germany and Austria to assist it against the Russian Revolution. It had long ago forgotten the money it had taken from the Allies.

One of the most remarkable features which I remember about this time was that, in spite of the terrible danger threatening the Revolution from outside, the power of the Soviets was strengthening throughout the southern and eastern provinces, and the Red Guards were marching from victory to victory against the internal counter-revolution. This first phase of the domestic war had already ended in victory for the Northern Soviets. A couple of days after the news that the German armies had been ordered to advance on the defenceless Revolution, the Red sailors of the Baltic Fleet marched victoriously into Novo-Tcherkask, and the South-Eastern Alliance collapsed, the Military Council of the Don Cossacks fled to the North Caucasus, and the Cossack regiments, that had gone over to the Northern Soviets, declared the Soviet Republic of the Don. General Kaledin had come to a tragic end. As the Red Guards were approaching Novo-Tcherkask, the last sitting of the Military Council of the Don was held. General Alexieff and the Cadet *émigrés* from the north insisted on general mobilization for war against the Soviets, the evacuation of all war stores and the withdrawal of all able-bodied men from the Don to the North Caucasus, as a preliminary to an advance on Central Russia. But Kaledin had no stomach for this fight. He apparently saw its hopelessness. But his advice had not been followed. Headstrong counsels had prevailed, and the once haughty satrap of Tsarism had the mortification of seeing his beloved Don overrun by the Northern Reds and his officer caste driven out before the awakening masses of the Cossack rank and file. Eyewitnesses reported in Petrograd that this had such an effect upon him that, in the last hour of the sitting of the Council, he retired to an ante-room and shot himself through the heart.

With the capture of Novo-Tcherkask the Reds obtained the key to the south-eastern steppes and to the Caucasus overland route. They already held Orenburg and the route into Central Asia. Everywhere local Soviets of landless peasants and working-class immigrants from the northern provinces were formed and established contact with the on-coming Red Guards. The geographically elected Zemstvos and municipalities disappeared and were replaced by industrially elected councils. The social revolution, which had already been accomplished in the north by November, was only now spreading to these regions. The Cadet *émigrés* and the Cossack officers were receiving their *coup de grâce* from the working masses of the east and south-east.

In the south-west, also, the Revolution was everywhere victorious. The Red Guards had occupied Kieff and were pushing into the Western Ukraine. The Ukrainian Soviets in the industrial centres of Kharkoff and Ekaterinoslav were extending their influence. Most of the parties of the Rada were now fugitives with the German General Staff, and were inviting foreign bayonets to reconquer the land from which they had been driven by their own people. But now the mistakes made at the beginning of the Ukrainian adventure began to tell heavily against the Revolution and its champions, the North Russian Soviets. The Ukrainian Communists in Petrograd had persuaded the People's Commissars to decide the question of self-determination in the Ukraine by forcible invasion from the outside with the object of overthrowing the Rada and presenting the Central Powers with an accomplished fact. As long as the movement against the Rada was confined to the local working population of the East Ukraine and to the *batraki* of the villages, all went well, and the social revolution in the Ukraine would have soon got a firm footing. But the interference of an external North Russian military force complicated the situation. This was all the more so in view of the fact that the Red Guards sent into the Ukraine were of a very different type from the highly conscious and well-disciplined sailors of the Baltic Fleet, who had driven the Cadets and Cossack officers out of the Don. The behaviour of the Red Guards of the Ukrainian expedition in Kieff beggared description. They plundered the houses of the rich and threatened even the Soviet Commissars who tried to control them. They arrested and shot anyone whom they heard in the streets speaking the Ukrainian tongue. In a word, a Terror, neither Red nor White, but just simply Black, reigned in those parts of the Ukraine which they reached. Within a few days feeling among the peasantry and lower middle

classes, and even among the urban working class, swung round against the Soviets, and the German General Staff and its protégé, the Rada, had no difficulty in finding a pretext for German forces to come into the Ukraine as deliverers. Owing to the peculiar social conditions of the Ukraine, the class struggle in this part of Russia was bound to be long and complicated. The Central Powers would probably in any case have found a pretext to invade this corn-growing area. But the blunder of the Northern Soviets in undertaking the military invasion of the Ukraine in the hopes of facilitating the social revolution and their inexcusable carelessness in sending the lowest elements of the Red Guards to do this work only facilitated the task of their enemies.

On February 18th I went early to the lobbies of the Taurida Palace. Revolutionary opinion did not seem to be unduly depressed. One of the leaders of the Left S.R.'s expressed his views in this way: "The more country the German generals seize, the more revolutionary material they will have ready to explode in their rear. The Revolution, driven underground, will find underground methods of fighting." The Left S.R.'s and the Anarchists were emphatic on the necessity of refusing to sign peace or even to treat with the Central Powers. They were for revolutionary war along the whole line. Some of the Bolsheviks inclined also to their view, but another section, apparently the largest, spoke of the necessity of signing an "unfortunate" peace. I even heard some criticisms of Trotsky for not having made use of the power he had received from the Convention by coming to terms with the enemy after protest. Towards evening the Central Soviet Executive met, and, after a stormy debate lasting over three hours, it was decided to send a wireless telegram to the Central Powers expressing readiness to sign peace on the terms offered at Brest-Litovsk, which meant the loss to the Revolution of part of the Baltic provinces and an indemnity of several milliard gold roubles. The general view was that, as long as the south-east provinces and the Ukraine were in the hands of the Soviets, the indemnities could somehow or other be paid. Moreover, the coming peace could be made use of by the Russian Revolution to influence the workers in Germany and Austria. The Left S.R.'s did not agree in principle to the sending of the telegram, but they decided not to oppose it. The Germans had not advanced far. There was reason to believe that after all they might have difficulty in moving in the vast country. They had pushed into White Russia and were nearing the borders of Esthonia. But the advance was

as yet very slow, and it was thought that the sailors and picked detachments of the Petrograd and Moscow workmen could bar the way of the Germans into the heart of revolutionary Russia. Everyone felt that the Red capital, at any rate, was safe.

For the next two days we pleasantly consoled ourselves with these ideas. On the 20th there was still no reply from the Germans to the telegram offering to sign peace. This gave considerable ground for uneasiness. Perhaps, after all, they are not going to have peace, and are determined to destroy the Revolution, I heard from several delegates at the Taurida Palace. A Red Guard from the Vitebsk region, who had just come in, told me that slowly but surely the German picked columns were creeping eastwards, and no one was able to offer them effective resistance. Advanced echelons had been seen as far as Orsha. I went to bed that night with a very uneasy feeling. Then came a thunderbolt. At midday on the following day a German wireless was picked up. It gave the terms on which the Central Powers were prepared to sign peace. It confirmed our worst fears. If the terms offered by Hoffmann to Trotsky were severe, they were nothing compared with these. Clearly, the Ludendorff party, heartened by the collapse, had decided to strike a mortal blow at the Revolution. The defeat of the Berlin strike had enabled them to overcome the more moderate tendencies represented by Herr Kühlmann and the German Foreign Office. The original war plan in the East was now to be revived. The line Reval-Kieff was not enough. The line Narva-Lake Peipus-Vitebsk-Kharkoff-the Crimea was now demanded. The Northern Soviets were to pledge themselves to make peace with the Rada on the terms to be dictated by the Central Powers. The hope of paying off the indemnities by the possession of the Ukraine was gone. This corn granary was to be torn from the living body of Russia. In all the territories occupied by the German troops, the civil authorities and police were to be organized and controlled by the German military. The indemnities remained, and in some particulars were increased to an amount difficult to estimate.

The atmosphere in the Taurida Palace was one of impotent rage. Groups of workmen's delegates stood round waiting for couriers from the front. Others were organizing detachments of the Red Guard for the defence of Petrograd. Some thought all chance of a successful resistance was lost, because the peasants were passive. These were recommending evacuation of Petrograd and Moscow and a retirement on the Urals. A terrible struggle

was going on in the mind of every revolutionary leader and delegate on that day. The Russian Revolution was like Faust in conflict with Mephistopheles. It seemed to be crying aloud :

Two souls are living in my breast ;
One tries to break asunder from the other.
One clings in sturdy love of life
To Mother Earth with desperate embrace,
The other lifts itself defiant from the dust,
And seeks new worlds beyond our mortal ken.

In this hour of trial the Revolution had its idealists, who would sacrifice everything material, all immediate prospects, on the flaming pyre of an idea, in the hopes that future generations might know that this generation had gone to its destruction pure. But the Revolution had also its realists, who would snatch the practical advantage of the hour as an instalment of greater acquisitions to come. The former were found in the ranks of the Left S.R.'s and the Anarchists and among some of the Bolsheviks. The latter were found solely among the Bolsheviks. Characteristic of the insignificance to which the Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s had sunk at this time was the fact that their handful of delegates in the Central Soviet Executive remained completely in the background during this great crisis.

The first voice to sound, as a guiding signal in the darkness, was that of Lenin. In the Bolshevik organ *Pravda* for February 23rd a thesis appeared over his signature. In it he set forth in decisive language the reasons why the Russian Revolution should sign the peace terms of the Central Powers. The thesis was divided into a number of parts, and its importance as a factor guiding the Revolution at this hour makes it essential to give its principal features. The following is an extract :

I. The Russian Revolution, reaching a culminating point in October, is bound to pass through a period of civil war, because the propertied classes cannot be expected to give up their privileges without a struggle. This means that the Soviets must concentrate their efforts on the internal struggle.

II. The foreign policy of the Russian Revolution must be based on the general international situation—namely, the probability or improbability of the outbreak of the social revolution in the rest of Europe. But events of the last week have shown that the chances of this are slight. Therefore it is a mistake for the Russian Revolution to base its policy on uncertain eventualities.

III. In Germany the reaction has temporarily triumphed, setting before the Russian Revolution the alternatives of further war or an annexationist peace.

IV. To sign a peace with German Imperialists is not, objectively speaking, treason to International Socialism. When workmen are beaten in a strike, and have to accept bad terms from their employers, they do not betray their class because they have not got all the demands they asked for. They only accept bad conditions, in order to prepare for another struggle later.

V. If the Russian Revolution continued the war in alliance with Anglo-French Imperialism against Austro-German Imperialism on the basis of the old secret treaties, published by Russia, but not repudiated by the Allies, then it would be prostituting itself to foreign Imperialists.

VI. As long as there is no intensification of the class struggle in Germany and England, leading towards the social revolution, the Russian Revolution must seek the most favourable conditions for its existence, relying as little as possible either on the English or German Government. The Russian Revolution must adopt a neutral attitude towards both Imperialist camps, and this is only possible by coming out of the war.

VII. It is not true that the Russian Revolution is deserting Socialist and Labour comrades in England and France by signing a separate peace with the German Imperialists. The revolutionary movement in the West must of necessity be slower than in the East. Nevertheless, the material weakness of Russia forces her to recuperate for internal reconstruction.

VIII. It would be a rash adventure to enter upon a Holy War against German Imperialism, on the chance of a social revolution breaking out in Germany in the next few months, for meanwhile defeat would mean more onerous conditions for the future development of the Revolution in Russia.

IX. By concluding a separate peace, Russia can utilize the fact that the Anglo-German Imperialists are too much engaged in a life and death struggle to attend to her seriously.

This thesis became at once the subject of the most furious discussion. The time for decision was now at hand. The new German ultimatum expired next morning (February 24th), and that night the Central Soviet Executive had to meet to give its fateful decision. In the few hours that intervened, therefore, the thesis acted like yeast in dough. It acquired many supporters and, as it seemed also, many bitter opponents. At eight o'clock on the evening of the 23rd the delegates of the Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s in the Central Soviet Executive met in their party groups to discuss the situation. They were both equally divided, and after long and fruitless discussion it was decided towards midnight that the two party groups should sit together in the central hall of the Taurida Palace and see whether a common session might not enable a decision to be reached. The Anarchists also joined. The only groups that were kept out were the small fraction of the Mensheviks and the Right S.R.'s. I was present in the gallery and shall never forget the atmosphere of depression and tension—such a contrast to the triumphant scenes which that same hall had witnessed not a fortnight before, on the opening of the Great Convention! Those few people who were present at this gathering as spectators, like myself, were suffering the same mental torture as the delegates. At one moment I found myself secretly hoping that Lenin's cautious, if opportunist, policy would prevail. At another moment I was almost about to cry out to the delegates in the hall to refuse to sign and declare a Holy War on Western Imperialism.

Half an hour after midnight the War Commissar and Commander of the Red Guards, Krilenko, former ensign in the old army, rose on the tribune. He read messages from the front, showing that the remnants of the old army of the north-west were declining to fight and were retreating before insignificant German columns. The only resistance came from revolutionary detachments of Esthonian and Lettish volunteers. A sailor from the Baltic Fleet then rose and read reports from the Marine Commissariat, which showed that the naval defence of the Gulf of Finland was now rendered almost impossible, because of sabotage at the critical moment in the face of the enemy by certain technical naval staffs, and because the shore batteries, which were manned by peasant soldiers of the old army, were all putting down their arms and going home. The sailors of the fleet, whose ranks were depleted by the detachments of Red Guards sent to fight Kaledin, could not alone hold the Gulf. Both these speeches made a terrible impression on the delegates. The struggle was clearly hopeless. But this seemed only to rouse the heroic spirit in the breasts of some Bolsheviks and Left S.R.'s. Madame Kolontay, the Commissar for Social Welfare, was engaged at this moment in bitterly accusing Lenin, whom she had buttonholed behind the tribune, of treason to the Revolution in publishing his thesis. "Enough of this opportunism!" she cried; "you are advising us to do the same thing which you have been accusing the Mensheviks of doing all the summer—compromising with Imperialism." Lenin, calm and unmoved, was stroking his chin and looking on the ground. Meanwhile the stormy petrel, Radek, was walking nervously up and down behind the tribune, with pale face and bloodshot eyes. It seemed almost as if he was preparing to hack to pieces some phantom General Hoffmann of his imagination. He asked to speak, and in biting terms he exclaimed from the tribune that the signing of this peace would mean the moral bankruptcy of the Russian Revolution and the handing over of Eastern Europe to Prussian reaction. How could they face the Polish, Lithuanian, Lettish, Esthonian and White Russian Socialists after they had delivered them over to the German General Staff. After Radek came the trade union leader, Ryazanoff, who passionately denounced the idea of signing peace, and said that it was better for the Revolution to go down with honour than expire with disgrace. No one seemed to be ready to speak in favour of signing, and it looked as if the idealists would win.

Then up rose Lenin, calm and cool as ever. Never did such responsibility rest on the head of one man. Yet it would be

a mistake to assume that his personality was the most important factor in this crisis. Lenin's strength at this time, as at every subsequent time, lay in his ability to interpret the psychology, both conscious and unconscious, of the Russian workmen and peasant masses. He seemed to know what the members of the thousands of provincial and district Soviets were saying at this moment without summoning a new All-Russia Soviet Congress. "Let us not become slaves to phrases," he began; "let us consider what are the practical conditions confronting the Revolution. Our impulse tells us to rebel, to refuse to sign this robber peace. Our reason will in our calmer moments tell us the plain naked truth—that Russia can offer no physical resistance, because she is materially exhausted by a three-years' war. It is true there may be people who will be willing to fight and die in a great cause. But they are romanticists, who would sacrifice themselves without prospects of real advantage. Wars are won to-day, not by enthusiasm alone, but by technical skill, railways, abundance of supplies. Has the Russian Revolution any of these in the face of an enemy equipped with all the technique of bourgeois 'civilization'? The Russian Revolution must sign peace to obtain a breathing-space and to recuperate for the struggle. The central point of the world struggle now is the rivalry between English and German finance-capital. Let the Revolution utilize this struggle for its own ends."

Lenin's speech at once had a great effect. No one could summon up courage to reply, because everyone seemed to feel in his heart that Lenin was right. For myself, in spite of a burning feeling for revenge on the Prussian generals, I now began to incline towards Lenin's view. The sitting was adjourned till two o'clock in the morning, when it became the full sitting of the Central Soviet Executive by the addition of the Menshevik and Right S.R. fractions. Lenin spoke again, using the same arguments. Then Kamkoff, the leader of the Left S.R.'s, spoke officially for his party, who in the meantime had arrived at a decision. He admitted the correctness in fact of Lenin's thesis, but declined on behalf of his party to accept the moral responsibility before Europe of signing a disgraceful peace. The Soviets should evacuate Petrograd, retire into the interior and defy the Germans to come on. If a contrary decision was taken, the Left S.R.'s would not resist it, but would withdraw their members from the Council of the People's Commissars. At five o'clock in the morning it was decided to take a free vote, uninfluenced by party discipline. I shall never forget these moments. Everything seemed to hang on that vote. To the

last moment I could not have said which of the souls of the Russian Revolution, struggling for mastery, I hoped would win. At last the decision came. At five o'clock in the morning the hands were counted; 112 for signing peace, 84 against, 24 abstentions. At six o'clock on a bitter winter's morning I returned home and slept from a combined feeling of weariness and hunger.

On the following day those Bolshevik Commissars and delegates who had opposed Lenin on the previous night made a tour of the city and the factories, in order to find out the state of popular feeling. They came back to the Smolny in the afternoon, convinced that resistance was impossible. The best and most conscious workmen in the Putiloff, Baltic and Obuchoff works, in the railway yards and on the wharves, realized the situation in which the young Soviet Republic was placed, and under other circumstances would have been ready to stream into the Red Guards, as they had done to fight Kerensky, when he was at Tsarskoye Selo, and as the sailors had done to fight Kaledin. But they declined to take on a hopeless fight against the well-equipped and disciplined German armies without the support of the peasants, who had been the backbone of the old army. Better make the best terms possible and let the Germans make trouble for themselves in the Baltic provinces and in the Ukraine; Great Russia would still have the Don coal basin, the Urals and the wheat lands of the Volga to fall back on. So they reasoned. Meanwhile Lenin had sent out telegrams to all the provincial Soviets in the territories of the Republic, asking them whether in their opinion the peace should be ratified or not. He explained that, while the Central Soviet Executive had accepted the German ultimatum at last night's sitting, and while delegates had already been despatched to Brest-Litovsk to sign peace, in order to stop a still further German advance, it was still open to the provincial Soviets to annul this decision, since the treaty would have to be ratified by a Special Congress of the Soviets, to be summoned as soon as possible.

Meanwhile we waited breathlessly for the German reply. February 25th passed, and the 26th came. The suspense was terrible. People began to say that perhaps the Germans had no intention of signing peace at all, and were going to march on Petrograd and Moscow. An alarming rumour spread through the city on the afternoon of the 26th that the Germans had taken Pskoff, and that their echelons had already appeared on the branch line Velikoye Luki-Bologoe. Autos from the Smolny raced out at once through the working-class quarters,

spreading leaflets calling on the workers to enter the Red Guards to defend Petrograd in case the Germans did attack. Next morning (27th) it was possible to see parties of workmen, armed with rifles and spades, going off in the direction of the Baltic station to dig trenches along the southern outskirts of the city. There was a general feeling in the air that, if the workers of Petrograd could not persuade the peasants to fight, they could at any rate turn their own capital into such a hornets' nest that the General Hoffmanns would think twice before trying to occupy and hold it. During the course of that day the German reply came, to the effect that the Central Powers were ready to sign peace on the basis of the ultimatum of the 21st. Delegates were to come to Brest-Litovsk. But there was no word about stopping the German advance, and as if to show contempt for the "Red Capital of the Revolution," during the afternoon a German aeroplane flew over from Pskoff and dropped two bombs on the Fontanka embankment.

Meanwhile the chaos in the south-west was intensifying. The Austrian picked detachments of Galicians, under the leadership of the treacherous Rada, began to advance towards Kieff. They were resisted by Polish legionaries, who claimed the West Ukraine for Poland. On the other hand, detachments of the same Polish legions under Pilsudsky, in the neighbourhood of Minsk, operated with the German armies in their advance against the Russian Revolution. Czecho-Slovak divisions, formerly deserters from the Austrian armies, in the neighbourhood of Kieff joined small Red Guard detachments to fight against the on-coming armies of the Central Powers. But relations between the Red Guards and the Czecho-Slovaks, even at this time, were not friendly. Both were jealous and accused each other of being in secret contact with the enemy. Here lay the seeds of future quarrel.

On the evening of the 27th the Central Soviet Executive met at the Taurida Palace, and Trotsky addressed them on the situation. He had disappeared for some days, and no one seemed to know what had happened to him. That night, however, he came to the Palace, and bracing himself up for a supreme effort, hurled the darts of eloquent scorn against the Imperialisms of the Central Powers and of the Allies, upon whose altar the Russian Revolution was being sacrificed. When he had finished, he retired again. Rumour had it that he was so overcome with mortification that he broke down and wept. But his work had not been in vain, as he seems to have thought at that moment. His words had been heard all over the world, and, if they had

not broken, they had at least shaken the citadel of capitalist Imperialism.

On March 1st the answers to Lenin's telegrams to the provincial Soviets began to come in, and batches of them were published in the official *Izvestia*. They were a remarkable reflection of the state of opinion in the provinces, and showed how correctly Lenin had estimated the feelings of his countrymen on that historic night (February 23rd), when he had single-handedly persuaded the Central Soviet Executive to accept the German ultimatum. The Soviets from the urban and industrial districts in North and Central Russia showed by the resolutions which they sent in that the workmen were ready to fight, because they were fully aware of the consequences of signing the peace. The majority of the resolutions, however, were non-committal, and those that openly advocated signing the peace insisted on making use of the time for the immediate creation of a powerful Red Army of the best working-class elements. The provincial peasant Soviets for the most part emphasized the exhaustion of Russia, the impossibility of struggle and the need before all else of peace. It was then clear that no successful resistance could be expected. Lenin knew that the moment demanded, not a continuance of the old war, but the utilization of the breathing space to disarm the counter-revolutionary bands on the fertile border lands of Russia and to lay the foundation of a workers' and free peasants' army.

On March 2nd Tchitcherin, who had gone as head of the new peace delegation to Brest-Litovsk, signed the treaty in the name of the Soviet Republic. But the advance of the Germans did not stop. Aeroplane attacks on Petrograd increased. From Pskoff their foreposts had pushed on to Luga, and there were alarming rumours that the Moscow-Petrograd railway had been cut. Whatever the diplomats of the Central Powers may have been thinking at this time, the German General Staff intended to push on as far as they dared, unhindered by any peace treaties. A hurried evacuation of Petrograd began. The bank deposits, the treasures from the museums and the most valuable machinery and stores from the munition works and iron foundries were hurried off to the interior. The plan, initiated in Kerensky's time, of transferring the centre of Government to Moscow and removing several important industries to the central provinces now received an additional impetus. Petrograd presented an extraordinary spectacle. Everyone wanted to be "evacuated." The rush for the stations was indescribable. By instinct everyone seemed to know that Petrograd, isolated

and far away in the north, was doomed to terrible famine, unless a large portion of the population left it. The difficulty of feeding Petrograd had already appeared in the second year of the war under Tsarism. Now it was a matter of life and death. The additional stimulus was the uncertainty whether the German generals would decide to take the city as a guarantee for the newly signed treaty.

While the various Soviet commissions were busy evacuating Petrograd and transferring the seat of Government to Moscow, an event took place which showed very clearly the attitude of the Allies towards the Soviet Republic in this hour of its danger. When it was clear that the mere signing of the treaty was not going to stop the German generals from marching into Russia, the question of the creation of a Red Army became an immediate and a very burning one. On behalf of the Council of the People's Commissars, Trotsky, who had now resigned from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and had taken over the War Office, approached the representatives of the Allied Military Missions in Petrograd to seek their assistance in the formation of a Red Army. He asked for instructors and technical organizers. A meeting was arranged at the War Office, at which Trotsky and representatives of the British, French and American Military Missions were present. The discussions lasted for some hours, and nothing was known about them publicly. Subsequently it transpired that the English representative had put forward a number of conditions which the Soviet Government was to fulfil before Allied assistance could be given. It appeared that he did not insist on the immediate declaration of war on the Central Powers, but he did insist on a number of conditions, which would have been tantamount to the re-establishment of the discipline formerly existing in the Tsar's Army.¹ Inasmuch as the most fundamental principle of the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited Peoples—the basis of the Republic's Constitution—was the disarming of the propertied classes and the officer caste, which served their interests, it was not likely that Trotsky would consent to the establishment of nominees of the Entente Missions with dictatorial powers in the new army. The American representative, however, did not seem to take so rigid a view, and for a few days a couple of American instructors did actually drill some detachments of the Red Guard in Petrograd. They were, however, soon recalled. Thus the Allies boycotted the Soviet Republic and

¹ This information was given to the writer by an official of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, who was present at the meeting.

preferred to see German Imperialism stride across its helpless body rather than assist it to rise and repel the tyrants. The reasons were obvious. The success of the Soviet Republic would be, in the long run, more dangerous to them than the success of Prussian militarism.

Meanwhile the German armies reached the line Narva-Lake Peipus-Mogilieff on the north front and stopped. Petrograd was safe, and the evacuation of the capital was successfully accomplished during the first two weeks of March. The People's Commissars and the Central Soviet Executive removed to Moscow, whither the Extraordinary All-Russian Soviet Congress was called for March 15th. The advance of the armies of the Central Powers now began on the southern front. Under the terms of the treaty the Central Powers were able to occupy the Ukraine and "self-determine" it as they thought fit. The Red Guards retired everywhere, unable to resist their superior opponents. Moreover, the Red Guard detachments which had been sent into the Ukraine had made themselves so unpopular that the working and peasant population almost welcomed the Germans. This first and most disastrous chapter in the history of the Northern Russian Soviets' relations with the Ukraine thus came to a close. But the German generals pushed on and threatened the coal basins of Ekaterinoslav, occupied the northern coast of the Black Sea and the port of Odessa, and drew close to the coalfields of the Don. Territories not mentioned in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty were now being claimed and occupied by the agents of Ludendorff in Russia. Could the Soviet Republic resist? Could an efficient nucleus of a Red Army be formed, well-disciplined enough to hold the Germans in check? Again the answer was left to the Allies. On March 15th an Extraordinary Soviet Congress had to decide whether it would ratify the robber Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which was not even respected by those who dictated it. The only hope of organizing resistance and of not ratifying lay in raising the boycott of the Soviet Republic on the part of the Allies. But the March days went by. The Allied Governments could not forget the secret treaties which the Soviet Republic had published. They dared not fight side by side with the Government whose peace programme Trotsky had hurled down before the Prussian generals at Brest-Litovsk. And so March 15th came and went. The Extraordinary All-Russian Soviet Congress ratified the robber peace with the Central Powers, and the Revolution went its own way to Calvary.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LAND LAW AND SOVIETS IN THE PROVINCES

IF I were to try to characterize in a few words the political condition of Russia at this time, I would compare it to that of wax or of something in a viscous state, upon which someone had made an impression with a stamp. To be precise, it would have to be added that more than one person had been at work with a stamp, and that at least two impressions could be already seen on the surface of the newly forming society. Without doubt the ideas of the Marxian Bolsheviks, of whom Lenin was the best and by far the ablest mouthpiece, had even at this time had the greatest and, as subsequent events showed, the most lasting influence upon the Revolution. But one would fail altogether to understand the drama of these times if one did not pay attention to the other, hardly less important influence, which came from the ideas of the Anarchists and of their far more numerous next-of-kin, the Left S.R.'s.

I have already pointed out, in the chapter dealing with the Great Convention, that the latter groups succeeded very perceptibly in making their influence felt during the drafting and passage of the Declaration of the Toiling and Exploited Peoples. But their ideas can be seen with even greater clearness in the work of the Land Commission, appointed by the Great Convention to work out the details of the Agrarian Law, which was to sweep away all traces of feudalism from the Russian plain and lay the foundations of communal society in the Russian villages. All through the crisis of Brest-Litovsk this Commission sat in one of the empty halls of the Smolny. No one paid much attention to its work, and I think I was the only person from the outside world who attended and followed the greater part of its discussions.

In order to secure the support of the party representing at this time the large "middle" element of the peasantry, the Bolsheviks had offered to the Left S.R.'s the Commissariat of

Agriculture, and subsequently also 50 per cent. of the membership of the Land Commission. This fact had great influence upon the agrarian legislation of these times. One has only to analyse a little in detail the Land Law, which was subsequently passed as the result of the work of the Commission, to see this. But the discussions in the Commission were, perhaps, even more interesting than the results which it produced. All through the proceedings I remember observing most distinctly the conflict between the two ideas, represented by the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s. The former held that the class struggle was penetrating into the villages, that there would be no peasant "class" at all, but a number of conflicting classes among the peasants in every village, as soon as the question of the division of the landlords' estates came to be dealt with. They held that the bearer of the Revolution in the provinces must be the poorer part of the peasantry, who must, relying on the urban proletariat, organize a system of State capitalism in agriculture, as a prelude to the abolition of classes in the village. Against this point of view the Left S.R.'s and their Anarchist sympathizers held out the idea of the "free and independent rural labour commune," which would be a barrier against a bureaucratic State machine, as hateful to them, when run by a proletarian dictatorship, as when run by an agrarian aristocracy.

During the earlier part of the discussion the Left S.R.'s seemed to have the preponderance. Marie Spiridonova was elected President of the Commission, while the Commissar for Agriculture, Kalagaëff, in the name of the Central Committee of the Left S.R.'s, brought forward a draft of the Land Law as proposed by that party. It was an exceedingly interesting document, because it clothed with some substance the rather nebulous utterances, which generally characterized the Left S.R.'s. The fundamental idea of the proposed law was the "equalization of land allotments."¹ The ancient tradition, which had been held for centuries in the Russian villages, that no man should hold more land than he could work with his own labour, was here translated into legal language. But this tradition had in actual fact arisen out of the poverty of the peasant under his feudal lord. Its object was not to create a communal form of land cultivation, in which each should work for all as intended by this law, but to prevent one peasant from securing any advantage over his neighbours in the general poverty and degradation in which everyone lived before the Revolution. The Anarchists were now trying to utilize this tendency which had been so strong

¹ I thus translate the Russian original, *uravnilomoye zemli-polsovanyo*.

a feature of the North Russian village, to create at once, without passing through the phase either of private or of State capitalism, a complete rural communal society on the ruins of the class dictatorship. Was this not the idea which had been preached for wellnigh forty years by the Narodniks, who believed that Russia was destined to show the way to Communism by a short cut, without passing through the industrial capitalism of Western Europe? Was there not here the same idea as that which prompted the Blanquists to issue their manifesto in 1874 against the Marxists of the First International, when they proclaimed themselves—"Communists, who wish to arrive at their ends without intermediate stages and without compromise?" And here again at this stage of the Great Russian Revolution we saw it coming up in the utterances and actions of those representing the "middle" peasantry. But the mere fact that the Left S.R. and Anarchist groups were speaking for only a section of the Russian village (the "middle" peasantry) showed that a labour commune "containing the peasants as a class" was now a Utopia, for the process of disintegration into conflicting classes had already gone far in rural Russia. Moreover, as the subsequent development of the Revolution in the villages shows, the Left S.R.'s contained not solely altruistic, anarcho-communist intellectuals, but also small proprietor interests, which found refuge for the occasion in revolutionary phrases.

It was soon clear that the Bolshevik members of the Commission were not content to leave the land settlement wholly to the Left S.R.'s and Anarchists, but wanted to insert in the draft brought forward by Kalagaeff clauses which would represent a more realistic standpoint. The Left S.R. members had set themselves strongly against the principle of State farms, on which the workers would be wage-earners, as in any private capitalist concern. "Shall the Revolution set up wage-slavery again under the auspices, not of landlords nor of the bourgeoisie, but this time of persons with the high-sounding name of People's Commissars?" So spoke a Left S.R. member of the Commission, opposing a Bolshevik amendment moved on the second day of the sitting. This amendment aimed at establishing State farms under the Commissariat of Agriculture on all highly cultivated demesne lands of the former private estates. A long and rather wearisome discussion followed, during which I heard privately that the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party had just instructed its representatives on the Land Commission not to press its amendments too hard and to give a considerable freedom of action to the Left S.R.'s. Here again the influence of

Lenin was to be felt. It was essential to propitiate the "middle" peasant element in this phase of the struggle with international capitalism. As long as a compromise on principles which were not at this moment vital, and which could be righted later, could be obtained, Lenin was prepared to use its advantages to secure support in other fields. Once again he demonstrated an almost Asiatic astuteness. As the Bolshevik opposition to the Left S.R.'s in the Commission diminished during the following days, I seemed to see this new Muscovite Tsar, playing with his unsuspecting adversaries of the extreme Left, like Ivan the Terrible with the Tartar Khans.

Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks succeeded in slipping into Kalagaeff's draft a number of clauses and amendments which, though apparently harmless, were in reality the Marxian yeast to leaven the Anarchist dough. For instance, Article 13 of the Land Law provided that "the organs of Soviet authority have the right, with a view to the improvement of agriculture by model and experimental farms, to borrow limited plots from the land fund and work them by State-paid labour, such labour to be subject to workers' control according to the law." Thus the Bolsheviks succeeded in introducing the principle that, under certain conditions and with certain limitations, a central authority might participate in the land settlement, in order to counteract anarchical distribution, which under the cover of revolutionary phrases might in the long run only consolidate private property again. It was hoped, with the consent of the Left S.R.'s, to create islands of State economy in the country-side, where agriculture should be run on a scientific organized plan, and where rural labour should learn discipline for the common weal. But the Left S.R.'s were suspicious enough of this attempt to introduce "bureaucracy" to insist on the insertion at the end of Article 13 of the provision which made all State farms subject to "workers' control."

A great discussion then took place on the question of what societies, institutions or categories of individuals should have precedence in securing allotments of the latifundia to be distributed. The Bolsheviks wanted to arrange that a State farm should be established in every district of every province, to provide food for the industrial centres and to educate the surrounding peasantry in intensive methods of cultivation. At once the Left S.R.'s objected that this was giving too great a predominance to the State centralization principle, and that in each district the rural Soviet should be given autonomous rights to decide on the amount of land to be devoted for this

purpose and the amount to be given over to "free communes of the rural workers." After a discussion lasting for nearly two days, a compromise was reached in Article 20 of the Land Law. According to this the State, which in this case was the Commissariat of Agriculture, had the right to withhold land from distribution to private persons or to rural communes, on condition that the land thus withheld was to be used for educational purposes only. Land to be used for general cultivation was to go in the first category to communes of rural labourers, who would agree to work the land in common and under conditions decided upon by themselves, in the second category to groups of families, who might agree among themselves to work the land in common, and in the third category to private families and individuals, provided that in each case no community or persons received more land than they could work with their own labour.

Most elaborate clauses were then drawn up by the Left S.R.'s and passed with the consent of the Bolsheviks, providing rules for ascertaining in each district the average amount of land which a single able-bodied man could work in one year, and on which he could secure a means of livelihood. The same average was worked out for families with varying proportions of able-bodied men and women and youths, girls and aged persons. The whole country was divided into areas, in which the average land allotment was determined for the average family, varying according to climate and soil. The whole of these clauses represented an extraordinary and praiseworthy attempt to reduce to practical language the theory of equality for each individual in rural economy. Like everything, however, emanating from anarcho-communist quarters, it aimed at levelling down rather than at levelling up. Moreover, it tended to be Utopian in that it tried to jump over into a communist society without securing first that the necessary discipline and readiness for self-sacrifice was present among the masses of the rural population. The idealists, who drew up these clauses and put them through the Commission, were certainly not aware of the village "interests," which were supporting this "equalization" plan in the hope that it would enable them to climb one step higher in the social scale and become landlords themselves on the ruins of the aristocracy. And so these clauses for the equalization of land allotments in the various areas of the Republic remained for the most part on paper—a wonderful testimony to the idealism, if not to the realism, of their promoters. The Bolsheviks had, however, secured their objects. They had thrown a sop to the "middle peasantry" and had got the beginning of State

capitalism in rural economy, which could subsequently be developed and enlarged in the coming fight against the small village owner and speculator. For the class struggle, though practically finished in the towns with the expropriation of the big private banks, was only beginning in the villages.

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By the middle of March the Brest-Litovsk Treaty of Peace with the Central Powers was ratified, and the Land Law had passed the Central Soviet Executive. Northern and Central Russia was settling down to its "breathing space." How was the country going to make use of it? Had the Soviets in the distant provinces the influence and the prestige to commence a plan of socialist reconstruction on the lines laid down by the Great Convention? In order to see how these questions could be answered, I decided to visit the province of Vologda, whereby incidentally I might recoup myself from the strain of life in famished Petrograd. The scenes in Petrograd and along the railway going eastward will not easily be forgotten by anyone who saw them in these days. The old capital of the Tsars was being evacuated. Trains laden with the treasures of museums, the gold reserves of banks, the valuable metal stores of the great factories, were passing out of the termini of Petrograd for days on end. Other trains were crowded with refugees from the regions occupied by the Germans, with demobilized elements of the old army, with wandering bands of Red Guards, and with hungry workmen and landless peasants, seeking new land in the East. At each station the local railwaymen's or workmen's Soviets were issuing their own orders, setting up their own Commissars, and paying little or no heed to imploring telegrams from the Central Soviets in Petrograd and Moscow. Occasionally a band of Red Guards would commandeer a whole train, turn the passengers out and force the driver to take them off in one direction or another. Quite a number of the Red Guard units refused to recognize the authority of the Central Soviet to ratify the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and continued to fight in a guerilla warfare with the Germans in the western provinces. The most famous of these bands was that of Dibenko, the intrepid Bolshevik able-seaman from the Baltic, who, with his sailor comrades and workmen from the naval yards in Kronstadt, declared himself "independent" of the Government that had signed the "shameful peace," and continued the war as before. He was subsequently arrested by Red Guards loyal to the Petrograd and Moscow Soviets and the Central Executive, and brought before

a revolutionary tribunal, which, however, only reprimanded him. This was not before he had with his army traversed a large part of Western and South-Western Russia, commandeering trains as he went, and finally ending up in the Crimea.

Everywhere it could be seen that the spirit of rebellion still stalked the land. There were no more landlords or Cadet bankers to rebel against now, but there were invading Germans, for whom their own treaties were "scraps of paper," and there were Soviet Commissars in Petrograd and Moscow. The latter represented authority, and all authority was anathema in those days. Cyclopean fires, smouldering for centuries beneath the surface, were burning themselves out. The primitive instinct for revenge on age-long class oppressors was strong, and did not shrink from theft, murder, rape and outrages on the now defenceless bourgeoisie. In memorable lines a Left S.R. writer¹ depicted the spirit of these days. Twelve Red Guards, aimlessly wandering, relieving former bank directors of their fur coats, describe to one another the girls they have met in different towns, the methods by which they did them to death in paroxysms of rage bordering both on hate and love. Such men were the personifications of the spirit arising in those days from the abysmal depths. With amazing candour and honesty, the revolutionary poetry produced in Russia during the end of the winter 1917-18 describes these types, and Block, as the title of his poem shows, half-deifies them. It is most important, however, to understand that these symbols of rebellion were also the symbols of that very lack of discipline which made the proletarian dictatorship impossible in the long run, and against which the Bolsheviks had to commence now a relentless struggle.

Of course, not all the "apostles" were of this extreme type. I met many less buccaneering, but no less dangerous types, on my arrival at Vologda. This provincial town was a centre on which railway lines going south and east converged. I used to visit regularly, after my arrival there, a dingy tea-room opposite the railway station. On the first night a party of demobilized soldiers from the old army sat at the same table as myself and described to each other their plans for selling off the rifles, cartridges and food stores of the regiment to which they had once belonged. The colonel had long since been shot because he had court-martialled a deserter in the days of Kerensky. They described how the artillery had been sold to the Germans during the armistice in exchange for bread. The rest of the equipment was being conveyed in commandeered railway trucks to Vologda

¹ Alexander Block's poem, "The Twelve Apostles."

and sold in the surrounding villages. Thus a small part of the savings of the French peasant, which had supplied the materials for Tsarist militarism, was finding its way into the Russian peasant's homes—a small recompense, indeed, for the five million Russian youths killed and wounded in the preceding years for the profits of the Paris Bourse.

On the next night I met a *meshochnik*, a person who carries a sack and travels between the hungry town and the village, selling flour at speculative prices. This was another type most common at this period of the Revolution. He was a peasant and had taken part in the general scramble which accompanied the liquidation of the landlord's demesne in his village. He had got off with some first-class prize cattle, which he had promptly butchered, and several hundredweight of flour, which he was selling at an excellent profit, enriching himself on the labour of others. His conscience was easy, because he had, as he said, lost two sons in the war and had been trying all his life to feed a family of eight on two acres of land. But the new Soviet authority troubled him. He described with indignation how a Commissar with two Red Guards had taken away his sack on a previous occasion and called him a "speculator." This last time, however, he had learned how to get even with this new tyranny. He had dodged the Red Guard cordon by getting out at a wayside station and walking on foot, with the sack on his back, to the town. Just as the Tsarist and Kerensky regimes had been the embodiment of oppression to him, because they had kept him under landlords and sent him to fight in foreign wars, so now he saw the counterpart of these old regimes in the Soviet authority, because it did not permit him, after he had at last got access to the land, to sell his produce as he wished. Freedom for him meant freedom to levy tribute on the hungry towns.

My acquaintance with the Red Guards was made, curiously enough, not in a barracks, but in a monastery. One of the wandering bands going about Russia had decided that Vologda was too respectable, and needed a Red Guard to do some "bourgeois-baiting." Accommodation was scarce, but the abbot of the monastery next to the cathedral had a nice residence. So the abbot had to squeeze himself into two rooms, because the "comrades" wanted the rest for themselves and their horses. In the big barn everything, which the "comrades" succeeded in squeezing out of the Vologda bourgeoisie was kept. I found there fur coats, goloshes, and sacks of flour taken off the *meshochniks*—a regular hawk's larder in fact. And the abbot stood by

and had to see his barn used for these purposes. Occasionally he was allowed to buy something from the accumulating store, but not very much, because he too was reckoned among the species "*bourgeoisie*," sub-species *ecclesiasticus*.

In the midst of this chaos it was sometimes possible to find a few people who were trying to create some sort of order. Curiously enough, they were in nearly every case Bolsheviks, connected in some way or other with the provincial Soviet of workmen's delegates. I remember meeting one of them, a demobilized sailor from the Baltic Fleet, in the tea-room near the railway station one evening. He complained of the anarchy prevailing in the country, and prophesied disaster for the Revolution, unless some sort of plan and discipline were introduced. He had got the job of clearing the goods yards at the station of *meshochniks*, who had been using the place as a night camping ground and smuggling sacks on the freight wagons. He was trying to bring all the requisitions made on the railway into the common food fund for the town, and to prevent the Red Guards from reselling what they took from speculators, and so becoming demoralized themselves.

The headquarters of the party of discipline and order in Vologda was in the old Governor's house. Here sat the Soviet, mostly Bolsheviks, or, as they called themselves now, Communists, elected from the railway workshops, the water and electricity works and the local river transport. The Central Soviet in Petrograd, before it had removed to Moscow, had sent one of its members, an experienced Communist, Comrade Eliaver, to put some life into the work of creating "*socialist discipline*." He told me he had two difficulties to fight against. The first was the parasitic tendencies of the "*middle peasantry*" and the Anarchist intellectuals among the Left S.R.'s. The second was the still existing apparatus of the bourgeoisie, the geographically elected Zemstvos, dating from Kerensky's times, which declined to dissolve, and were encouraged with advice and money by the agents of the Allied Missions. The latter had migrated after the Brest-Litovsk Peace from Petrograd to Vologda, and were acting as the centre round which the suppressed bourgeoisie flocked for help and comfort. That the bourgeoisie were not even yet without power to sabotage the Revolution was made plain to me a few days after I arrived in Vologda. The Commissar of Finance had declared that coupons of the Kerensky "*Liberty Loan*" were currency on a par with the paper rouble, and the bank in Petrograd had paid my balance before I left in that currency. But on arrival in Vologda I discovered that no one

would accept them, either in the markets or in the public restaurants and tea-rooms. I inquired at the Soviet, and was told that, if anyone refused to accept them, I was to inform the chief of the Red Guards at once, and the latter was to put the refuser under arrest. But I found that the Red Guard captain, sitting in the seat of judgment in the empty stables of the requisitioned monastery, was in league with most of the innkeepers and speculators in the bazaar. After a long time, he said mysteriously that he knew someone who would take my coupons at a discount, it being understood, of course, that he got a share. So, after a complicated financial transaction, I changed the mysterious Petrograd coupons. In this way I learned that the Anarchist elements that had got into the Red Guard were second cousins to the bazaar speculators, who were making a good thing out of the Revolution.

It was a curious fact also that the Zemstvos of Kerensky times were still holding sittings in their old building across the river at Vologda. The members admitted openly that they did not recognize the Soviet authority, and were going to carry on as if the November Revolution had not taken place. Still more remarkable and characteristic of the condition of some of the provinces at this time was the fact that the Soviet for a long time permitted the sittings of the Zemstvos to go on without any interference. During the last week in March I attended two sittings of the Vologda Zemstvo. A local landlord was in the chair, and the discussions concerned the application of regulations on the land question passed during the Kerensky regime! Not one word was heard the whole time about the Soviet, the Commissar of Agriculture, or the recently passed Land Law of the Great Convention. The people present were all of the type that had been leading the Revolution during the summer of 1917 under Kerensky. Right S.R. members, who had failed to secure election in the Soviets after the Korniloff days, were making use of the fact that immediately after the fall of Tsarism the peasants and workmen voted for them, to retain the right to influence the Revolution now and to ignore the events that had happened since. The Cadet members were openly contemptuous of all Soviet decrees, and when it was suggested to them by some of the more cautious Right S.R. members that for practical reasons it was impossible to ignore the *fait accompli* of the Land Law, and that after all the landlords might secure in practice a mitigation of its application in view of the lack of agricultural experts who were prepared to work for the Soviets, they replied that the day was not far off when

they would come back to their estates with their previous power, and they would then settle accounts with the Soviets.

There was obviously some reason why they were able to take up this attitude, and it was not long before I was able to find out what it was. A man rose to speak on the question of supply of agricultural implements to the villages. He had just come from Petrograd, where he had been in touch with the British and French Consulates and Military Missions. He was in a position to inform them that the representatives of the Allies in Russia regarded the Zemstvos as the "legal representatives of the Russian peasants," and would have relations only with them. They regarded the Zemstvos and other bodies elected during the Kerensky period as the only bodies who would be faithful to the Allies, and would prevent any goods or material supplies from falling into the hands of the Germans. If they relied upon themselves and ignored "all other bodies pretending to power, they could be assured of all the necessary support from the Allies." I was thus able to see at first hand how the agents of the Allies in Russia, at a time when the Soviet authority was seeking to save Russia from the disaster of Brest-Litovsk and to secure a short "breathing space," were engaged in undermining its position and preparing the ground for armed intervention. This fact was soon grasped by the Soviet in Vologda, for a few days after this the Zemstvo members at a sitting were all arrested and expelled from the town, and the institution declared to be superseded by the Soviet on the basis of the decrees of the Great Convention.

But if the Vologda Soviet had strength to dissolve the old Kerensky institutions and centres of potential counter-revolutionary intrigue, it was not able as yet to exercise any appreciable influence on the surrounding districts. It was a little revolutionary island in an anarchic sea of peasant apathy. It tried to carry out the decrees of the Great Convention concerning the bread monopoly and the establishment of State farms on the landlords' demesnes through the agency of Commissars, but its efforts met as yet with only very partial success. Moreover, many of the provincial Commissars were still nominated by the Left S.R. Party, which, in spite of its decision to leave the Central Soviet Executive in Moscow and Petrograd after the Brest-Litovsk Peace, did not apply this rule strictly to the provinces. Here they still continued to exercise no little influence on the rural policy of the Soviets. In one sense they were useful to the Bolsheviks, because their intellectuals had the ear of the "middle" peasantry. Thus I found one of them in charge of

the Commissariat for Agriculture in Vologda, and at his invitation I attended a sitting of the inner "collegiate" of the Commissariat. Here I found a mixture of local professional revolutionaries from the Left S.R. Party and young peasant soldiers, just returned to their villages after being demobilized from the old army. The discussion turned on the question of how to apply the Land Law, and, as there were no Bolsheviks present, the opinion was freely expressed that the idea of State farms on the old demesnes was nonsense, and that if the Revolution was to be saved, it would be necessary to set to work at once and turn every village into a labouring commune, free and independent of decrees from a central authority. Various reports from the villages were read, which showed that in several places demobilized soldiers and sailors had taken the initiative in founding labour communes, in each of which a group of families had decided to work the land in common and divide the produce. They were applying to the collegiate for the loan of implements and seeds. Other reports were read of projects for forming societies for exploiting certain areas of forest on a co-operative basis. In all these cases the initiative was coming from below. Little groups among the rural population in quite remote regions were responding both to the spirit of the times and to the general economic pressure, which was forcing the poorer elements to pull together. The idealists among the Left S.R.'s on the collegiate were most enthusiastic at the prospects of seeing "one great rural commune of the labouring masses from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea."

Early in April I made a journey from Vologda to a neighbouring district, where the Commissar of Agriculture told me I could see one of the labouring communes in the making. A day's journey along the railway to Archangel brought me to a wayside station, where, on the grimy floor of a waiting room, I passed the night in company with peasants returning to their villages. On the following day I walked through the snow to a village a couple of hours to the south. Passing through strips of spruce forest, still covered with the last snows of winter, I reached a village of log houses with gables, picturesquely ornamented with little wooden figures, just as one sees on the old carvings of Muscovite art. In one of the largest houses in the village I found the Soviet, which was simply the old commune or "mir" under another name. I had a letter to one of the peasants, a member of the Left S.R. Party. He took me to his house, where I had some porridge (*kasha*) and tea without sugar. Then he took me outside the village to the demesne

farm, formerly belonging to the local landlord. The fate of this farm had been the subject of great discussion. The Vologda Bolsheviks wanted to turn it into a State farm and run it under the Commissariat. The Commissariat, however, made up as it was of peasants and Left S.R.'s, wanted to leave it to the inhabitants to convert it into a rural labour commune. When we got to the buildings, however, we found that they were all but empty. There was no live-stock, with the exception of an old horse, and there was nothing in the barn. There were some harvest and mowing machines, and they had remained because no peasant in the village had buildings to keep them. After a while my Left S.R. companion began to explain to me apologetically that, while Kerensky's regime still existed, the old generation of peasants in the village had seized the demesne lands and had divided the produce and live-stock of the farm among themselves. The greater part of a formerly intensively cultivated farm had been reduced to the level of the primitive husbandry around it. That had been the first effect of the March Revolution. Kerensky's Government Commissioner, pressed by the landlord, had tried to stop the break-up, but had failed. The November Revolution had brought into power the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s, and the latter were trying to unite the whole village in one labour commune and to throw the whole of the latifundium and the live-stock and implements in the demesne into a common land fund to be administered locally. But it was evident, on walking over the land, that the speculators and kulaks in the village were already hindering the work of the idealists. Outlying parts of the farm had been annexed to private holdings and were sown with winter rye, which was just peeping through the snow.

I attended that evening a sitting of the local Soviet. It had been decided at a previous sitting, under the pressure of the young men returned from the army and fleet, that the land seizures, which had been made prior to the November Revolution, were to be regarded as invalid, and the holders to be compelled to give the land up in view of a general redistribution in the spring. This had been carried through, and loud were the complaints of some of the grey-beards, who sat round the table in fur caps and sheepskins, at the behaviour of the unruly young men. The latter were mostly Left S.R.'s, and at this sitting of the Soviet they were going to found their labour commune, and draw in the old generation too, if possible. Under the Land Law they had power to redistribute the unimproved latifundia on the basis of "equal allotments for all." This had already

been done. But now they were trying to arrange that the whole land should be cultivated in common by the population of the village. There was a great deal of talk about the "conquest of the Revolution," and "land and liberty for the people." The old men sat by and said nothing, but it was not difficult to see what they thought of these ideas. Curiously enough, not a single Bolshevik was present, and the idea of the Vologda Soviet, that a small part of the demesne land should be turned into State farms and worked on a centralized system as an example to the rest, was not once brought up. The labour commune, which was to comprise every family in the village, was formed that night. A Utopian scheme indeed! The question of how to get seeds and stock to replace the losses which the war and the grabbing of the old peasants had caused to local economy was not discussed. For this it was necessary to consult the urban Soviet in Vologda, which was in the hands of the Bolsheviks. Would the Bolsheviks give out large credits in cash and stock to these "labour communes" without considerable rights of control and inspection? And yet this was just what our Left S.R. revolutionaries in the distant villages and their Anarchist intellectual friends would not hear of. A controlling Commissar was to them an emblem of bureaucratic tyranny.

I spent my last night in the village in company with an old peasant, who poured out to me the woes of Russia. He adopted the characteristic pre-revolutionary Russian habit of self-depreciation. "We are barbarians," he said, "we are useless people; let the English, French and Germans come and rule us, and we will be their slaves." And then he told me how he had recently had ten dessatines of land, a nice strip of forest and a mill. All this he had bought under the Stolypin law from the "mir," and all this was now being thrown into the common land fund—doubtless the reason why he was so pessimistic about Russia. A little later his younger son came in and joined in the conversation. But he did not see any reason to be down-hearted. He had got a share in the "labour commune," and was trying to persuade the family to stop sulking. The old man was morose and silent, and then disappeared for nearly an hour, while the rest of us lay down to sleep on the floor. I was awakened by curious sounds proceeding from the stove, and, looking up, saw its lid moving mysteriously. The subterranean noises increased, and suddenly a head appeared, covered with ash and dust; then a neck, a chest, and then the whole body of the hoary septuagenarian who was my host. "Don't be frightened," he said to me, seeing I was alarmed, "I was only having a steam

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bath in the stove. After hearing Nikolai Ivanovitch's ideas which he has brought with him from Petrograd, I require a little refreshment ! ”

On the following day I left the natives of these Vologda backwoods to fight out their agrarian problems between the old-stagers, hankering for the days gone by, the idealists with their “labour communes” and the centralizing Commissars of “revolutionary law and order.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BREATHING SPACE— BOLSHEVIK CHALLENGE TO LEFT AND RIGHT

WE have seen in the last chapter that the proletarian dictatorship in its early stages was being threatened quite as much from Anarcho-Communist elements of the extreme Left in the rural districts as from international capitalism of the extreme Right. We have seen also that the disciplinarians—the Bolsheviks—were prepared to make large compromises, in order to prevent a breach with the former and to maintain a united front against the latter. The Left S.R. Party, had withdrawn its members from the Council of People's Commissars, but retained its delegates in the Central Soviet Executive, and continued to hold the Commissariats of Agriculture in many provinces. There was thus some hope that the compromise would last, and that international finance-capital would be too much occupied in the European struggle on the plains of France to be able to intervene in the Russian Revolution.

Nevertheless, a test of the stability of the compromise between the Bolsheviks and the Left S.R.'s was soon to be forthcoming. About the middle of April the German Government announced its intention to send to Moscow an Ambassador in view of the state of peace, which, officially at least, existed between the Central Powers and the Soviet Republic. In return the latter was to be allowed to send an Ambassador to Berlin. The Left S.R.'s and the Anarchists, however, had from the first refused to recognize the Brest-Litovsk Peace. But while the former were prepared to stand by the decision of the last Soviet Congress, the latter, when it was announced that the German Government intended to send Count Mirbach to Moscow, stated through the medium of their press that they were determined that he should not come. They backed up this declaration with certain very definite threats, as the precursors of Count Mirbach, sent to prepare for his arrival, became aware, when they received anonymous letters in Moscow, announcing their coming obsequies, and mysterious packages, which speedily found their way into

a bucket of water. The Anarchists had a strong and active club in Moscow, and had succeeded in requisitioning a fine house not far from the Tverskaya, which they had christened, with unconscious humour, the House of Anarchy. Here their central committee had set up its abode, and had decided, in true Manchu Emperor style, that no foreign devils, who were agents of European capitalists, should defile the soil of the Russian Revolution. Moreover, their attentions were not confined only to the agents of the German Imperialists. One day about the middle of April Colonel Robins, the head of the American Red Cross, one of the Allied officials, who was known to be most sympathetic to the Soviet Government, was relieved of his automobile by some of the inmates of the House of Anarchy, as a warning that worse would follow if he did not clear out. When Colonel Robins reported this incident to Trotsky, who was now Commissar of War, he added that he would like to know if there was any central authority in Soviet Russia now, for if this were not so, he would forthwith comply with the desire of the Anarchists and leave Russia. Next day the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution met and decided in the night to clear out all the Anarchist clubs in Petrograd, Moscow and the provinces. In the dead of night the House of Anarchy in Moscow was surrounded by a company of reliable Red Guards and the inmates summoned to surrender. On receiving no reply, the Red Guard opened rifle-fire and sent a couple of light field-gun shots into the building. Within half an hour the inmates had surrendered. On the following day I inspected the House of Anarchy, and found most of its windows broken and two large holes in its outer walls. In a word, it looked thoroughly anarchical. Similar raids were made all over the country. The leaders were kept locked up for a short time, and the rank and file of the Anarchists, mostly young, unbalanced "intellectuals," were released, after having been duly deprived of their arms. Thus the Bolsheviks made their first challenge to the extreme Left. The realists had at last defied the idealists to hinder the Soviet authority from entering into relations with foreign capitalist Powers and from profiting by the latter's dissensions.

The Left S.R.'s were not directly concerned in the activities of the Anarchist clubs, but sympathized very largely with them. After the dissolution of their clubs, the Anarchists considered in secret sessions what tactics to adopt. Some of them proposed to commence a campaign of terror against the Bolsheviks and the agents of the Soviet authority. But it was realized that this would only result in weakening the Revolution in its struggle with

foreign Imperialism, and therefore it was decided to remain quiet for the present. A large number of Anarchists in the meantime joined the Left S.R. Party and continued under its cover to carry on their work against those who, they declared, were "betraying the Revolution to the international counter-revolution."

The realists and disciplinarians were not attacked only by the Anarchists and Left S.R.'s. Within the ranks of the Bolshevik Party itself there was a left wing, which was beginning to cause trouble about this time. It will be remembered that only after considerable difficulty did Lenin succeed in getting his own party to accept the conditions of Brest-Litovsk. A very powerful minority, led by such intellectual giants as Radek and Bukharin, had formed a group of their own within the party and were running their own newspaper, the *Communist*, which strongly criticized Lenin's tactics. They objected especially to the proposals, which began to be put forward at this time in quarters standing near to Lenin, to use officials and specialists of the old regime in the period of reconstruction. This, they said, would be opening the door to restoration. The opposition group within the Bolshevik Party, however, had nothing in common with the Left opposition which came from the Anarchists and Left S.R.'s. It was not directed against the principle of the centralized proletarian dictatorship in the intermediate phase between Capitalism and Socialism. It was directed against the form of the dictatorship, for it maintained that the proletariat was in a position to provide the machinery for running the public services without the assistance of the specialists and former servants of the bourgeoisie. It was idealist in another sense to the Anarcho-Communists.

Nevertheless, Lenin showed no more mercy to these "Left Communists" than he did to the Anarchists and Left S.R.'s. He lumped them all together and roundly accused them of uttering "petit bourgeois shibboleths." About a fortnight after my arrival in Moscow I was privileged to be present at a joint sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, the Moscow Soviet and the All-Russia Trade Union Executive, at which Lenin read a long thesis, called "The Next Problem of the Soviet Power." This thesis marked an important stage in the development of political theory in the Revolution, and was directed almost entirely against the various groups of the extreme Left. He began, of course, by dismissing the Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s of the Martoff and Tchernoff type, who had, he said, in the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom" sold themselves to the bourgeoisie. "We rejoice at this unity of the counter-revolu-

tionary front," he cried sarcastically, "from Miliukoff to Martoff; it should receive a testimonial for its splendid Bolshevik propaganda." He then brought his heavy guns against the Left S.R.'s, whose record, he showed, had been from the first days of the November Revolution one of wavering and hesitation, especially in moments of crisis, when the utmost discipline and decision were needed by the parties leading the proletariat. They were overwhelmed by the disaster which had fallen upon Russia and sought salvation in suicide. But conscious Socialists, he said, must and will accept such trials, no matter how heavy they are. The Left S.R.'s had shown themselves in their true colours. They were loud-mouthed revolutionaries with lower middle-class psychology. Turning now to the Left Communists in his own party, he attempted to show that they too were erring from the true faith and were showing themselves "petit bourgeois ideologists." "The chief argument of our Left Communists," said Lenin, "is that in our policy during the 'breathing space' we are leading towards State Capitalism. When I hear this, I wonder what has made these people forsake reality for formulas. Reality says that State Capitalism would be a step forward for us. How can they be so blind as not to see that our enemy is the small capitalist, the food speculator? He is more than anyone else afraid of State Capitalism, for his one idea is to grab for himself as much as possible on the ruins of the big owners and exploiters. On this point he is more revolutionary than the workers, because he is also vindictive. He willingly co-operates in the fight against the big bourgeoisie, not in order to build up a Socialist Commonwealth on the basis of proletarian discipline, but in order to reap the fruits of victory in his own private interests. If the Left Communists cry out against the methods of discipline in State Capitalism, their trend of thought becomes similar to that of the small bourgeoisie, who cry: 'Down with the rich, but no control.' That which divides the most revolutionary elements of the small bourgeoisie from the class-conscious proletariat is the watchword of the latter: 'Let us organize and discipline ourselves.'"

This memorable thesis of Lenin showed that the disciplinarians and realists among the Bolsheviks had thrown down the glove also at the Left in their own party, which while ready to attack the counter-revolution "from Miliukoff to Martoff" and the Anarcho-Communist elements among the middle peasantry, were nevertheless not ready to carry to its logical conclusion the dictatorship of the urban proletariat and the poorest peasantry. But this Left Communist opposition did not turn out to be so

serious as it appeared at first. One of the most important leaders of the group was shortly afterwards given the Central European department of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, and the other was sent to Berlin "on important work in connection with Russian war prisoners in Germany." The Left wing movement died down. The realists and disciplinarians had won the day, as far as the control of the Bolshevik party was concerned. After the break-up of the Anarchist clubs and the break-down of the Left opposition within the Bolshevik party, the only serious force which threatened from the Left was the still powerful party of the "middle peasants," the Left S.R.'s. The trial of strength with this party was still to come.

In the meantime the danger from the Right, from the front of international finance, was assuming alarming proportions. Undeterred by the terms of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which gave the Germans the right to create an independent state only in the Ukraine, the German columns which had entered the Ukraine continued marching eastwards till they reached the Don and were threatening the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga provinces. The excuse given by the German General Staff and by Count Mirbach, who in the meantime had arrived in Moscow, was that the eastern frontier of the Ukraine had not yet been determined, and that it was necessary to secure the German occupation of the territories further to the west. Wherever the German troops went, they made a complete restoration of the social and political system. The Tsarist officers and gendarmes came out of hiding and set up a regime of terror, executing every person who had been, even in the most indirect way, connected with the Soviet regime. "White" units from the old Tsarist army joined in. The most important of these was the unit of General Scherbacheff, the former commander of the Russian army on the Roumanian front, who, together with the Germans, marched into Rostoff-on-Don and maintained the most cordial relations with them from that day forth.

In the Ukraine itself the restoration was also in full swing. The German military party considered the time ripe for removing the puppet Rada, which had become nothing more now than a committee for registering its orders. The occasion was found when the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party, which had formerly been the mainstay of the Rada, demanded the carrying out of the land socialization law, which had been decreed in a "universal" shortly after the November Revolution. The Social Democrats tried to put pressure on the rump Rada, whereupon the German military hastily summoned the party of the *khleboroby*—a

rich peasant farmer group, which had been formed in the West Ukraine immediately after the German entry. The *khleboroby* members in Kieff were supplied with German rifles and munitions and sent to dissolve the rump Rada. The Social Democrats came to its defence, but the German soldiery intervened on the side of the *khleboroby*. The Rada was then dissolved, and the German commander, General Eichorn, set up a military dictatorship, nominally under the control of General Skoropadsky, a former officer in the Tsar's Life Guards. Thus the so-called "democratic" body in the Ukraine, the Rada, having played its part as a helpless tool of reaction, was thrown away, as soon as that reaction felt itself strong enough to dispense with its services.

The revolutionary movement in the Ukraine retired completely underground. The Polish and Great Russian landlords came back to their estates, and the Moscow capitalists flocked down to Kieff to obtain possession again of their sugar factories and coalmines. The factory and mine workers of the East Ukraine and the landless *baraki* dissolved their revolutionary committees, and their leaders withdrew to the backwoods to organize partisan bands for guerilla warfare with the Germans. The atmosphere in Moscow in these days became very depressed. I was present at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive on May 14th in the Trade Union Hall, at which Lenin tried to encourage the delegates with the assurance that, in spite of the restoration in the Ukraine, it must not be forgotten that the struggle between the two chief Imperialisms of Europe, the British and the German, still occupied the main attention of the German General Staff, and there was no reason to jump to the conclusion that the "breathing space" had yet come to an end. This, however, was cold comfort to the members of Lenin's own party, who were seeing daily the rich corn districts of the south and south-east falling under the power of the counter-revolution, and were feeling the strangle-grip of hunger on the towns becoming tighter and tighter.

Still less comfort was it to the fiery Left S.R.'s, whose leader, Kamkoff, roundly attacked Lenin for opportunism. He poured cold water on the "breathing space" and said that Soviet Russia could never settle down to any internal constructive work under these conditions, for the German military party were determined to surround Russia with a chain of Monarchist reactionary States. These they would use as a stepping-stone to effect a restoration in Moscow, as soon as they were less engaged elsewhere. The Soviet Government had bound itself hand and foot, and could

not render aid to the Ukrainian revolutionaries, because this was contrary to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. "We did not fear the Korniloffs and Kaledins, that spoke Russian," cried Kamkoff amidst thunderous applause; "why should we hold back before Korniloffs and Kaledins that speak German?" It was clear that the Left S.R.'s had wide sympathy in their attitude towards the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, even amongst many Bolsheviks, and it required all the persuasiveness of a Lenin to keep them to realities. One of Lenin's nearest men, Sverdloff, closed the debate with a searching analysis of the international situation, in which he pointed out that the German military party with its ambitious scheme of eastern conquest had not yet gained the upper hand in Berlin, and that the heavy industry groups in Germany were still more interested in the West than in the East. He read a communication from the German Ambassador in Moscow, which was obviously inspired from the Berlin Foreign Office, and which recognized the eastern frontiers of the Ukraine as those laid down in the third "universal" of the Rada. This meant that the Don and Crimea would lie outside of the areas to be controlled by the Germans under the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. And so the debate ended in a more hopeful strain than that in which it had begun. But would the German commanders in the East respect the decisions of the Berlin Foreign Office regarding the eastern frontier of the Ukraine?

About the middle of May I received information from a Bolshevik member of the Central Soviet Executive that within his party there was a group which was not in agreement with Lenin's view on the right course for the foreign policy of the Revolution. He assured me, however, that it was only a difference of opinion on the estimate of the international situation, and not on a question of principle. Lenin and Trotsky, he said, held that the international situation remained unchanged, even after recent events in the Ukraine. In spite of the growing strength of the Prussian military party, the increasingly threatening attitude of Japan, who had recently occupied Vladivostock, and the still undefined attitude of England and America, the outlook did not demand anything more than increased watchfulness and the strictest neutrality over against the struggling capitalist coalitions in Europe. A resolution to this effect had just been passed at a full sitting of the Council of the People's Commissars. There was, however, said my informant, a fairly strong opposition within the Bolshevik Party, which was led by Sokolnikoff, and frequently found expression in the official organ of the party, the *Pravda*. This opposition held that the "breathing space"

afforded by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty had come to an end, that the Prussian military party had definitely won, and that the restoration in the Ukraine was only a prelude to the restoration in North Russia. The foreign policy of the Revolution should therefore be definite and active, and the time had arrived for a step towards closer contact with the Allies. I telegraphed this important communication to the *Manchester Guardian* on May 15th, for I regarded it as an indication that the Allies might, if they went about it carefully, utilize the revolutionary opinion created by the German advance on the Don and the *coup d'état* in the Ukraine to considerable advantage.

That other Englishmen were aware that new possibilities were opening out under the then existing conditions is clear from the communication, dated May 8, 1918, of Bruce Lockhart, unofficial British agent in Moscow, to Colonel Robins, of the American Red Cross.¹ In this communication Lockhart cited six instances from personal observation at this time of Trotsky's willingness to come to some arrangement with the Allies, and added that "a policy of Allied intervention with the co-operation and consent of the Bolshevik Government is feasible and possible." My own impression at this time was that, although the Sokolnikoff group was increasing in strength, it was certainly going too far to say that the Soviet Government would have tolerated an Allied intervention, which would have tended to draw the Revolution on to the Allied side in the European war. Yet this seems clearly to have been in Lockhart's mind at the time. In support of my view I am able to quote a conversation which I had in the second week of June with Tchitcherin, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, and which I telegraphed to the *Manchester Guardian*. "If the Allies," said Tchitcherin to me, "seriously wish to assist Russia, they should first recognize the Soviet Government. At the present moment the policy of the Soviet Government is to keep Russia neutral. But if either of the great world groups shows to it more hostility than the other, it may be compelled to act with the less hostile one. Thus, if Germany attempts to occupy part of Great Russia, she may meet with the resistance of British bayonets side by side with Russian. Also, if Japan attempts to occupy Siberia, she may meet with German bayonets on the Urals. There can, however, be no question of military assistance from the Allies to Russia so long as Japanese troops are in Vladivostock without the permission of the Soviet Government. The Soviet Government considers its immediate task is

¹ See *Secret Documents*, published by League of Free Peoples, Washington; also *Daily Herald*, June 28, 1920, telegram from Paul Hanna, Washington.

to conclude economic agreements with both the Allies and the Central Powers, which will be advantageous to Russia." It is clear from this that there could be no question of Allied intervention with the consent of the Soviet Government at this time. At the very most it might have been a question of "a separate war," if the "separate peace" could not have been preserved any longer.

In the meantime, however, there was evidence that the Allied Governments could not make up their minds what policy to adopt towards Russia. The French, as everyone knew, were preparing their plans. The British and American unofficial agents in Russia coquetted with the Soviet officials. As if to test their sincerity, a member of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs suggested to Lockhart one day that the British Government might give a proof of the sincerity of its desire to assist Soviet Russia by providing machine-guns and ammunition for the revolutionary forces which were fighting against the Germans in the Ukraine and on the Don. The fact was that Moscow was at this time the centre of a large secret organization, which was carrying on guerilla warfare against the Germans. The Bolsheviks had given the Anarchists a free hand to use the territories of North Russia as a ground for hatching plots against the dictatorship of the Prussian military caste in South Russia. With them were joined the secret terrorist organizations of the Left S.R.'s. I well remember observing during May and the succeeding months how men whom I had formerly known as respectable S.R. delegates of the Great Convention, and who were regular attendants at the sittings of the Central Soviet Executive, suddenly disappeared for weeks at a time. When I saw them on the next occasion they would, with furtive glances around them, tell me of raiding expeditions in the Ukraine, of bombing parties blowing up encampments of German soldiers, of bands of Ukrainian peasants which they had led. But they had always to retire to the forest belts which divided Great Russia from the Ukraine in the provinces of Tchernigoff and Kursk for lack of sufficient bombs and ammunition. The Bolshevik officials all along the demarcation line afforded them every assistance, and smuggled them over under cover of darkness, in spite of the fact that this was an obvious breach of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. And in order to show Count Mirbach and General Eichorn that they could not pursue a policy of restoration in the Ukraine and on the Don without running grave risks, this request for British assistance in the equipment of these Red bands was made. The request was telegraphed to London. No reply was forthcoming

for several weeks. When it came, it was a refusal on the grounds that the supplies and equipment might find their way into the hands of the Germans! Small wonder that the comments which I overheard in the lobbies of the Central Soviet Executive after this were to the effect that the British Government was much more interested in suppressing the Revolution in the Ukraine than in preventing the expansion of German Imperialism in the East.

The increasing danger to the Revolution, which came from the Prussian generals in the East, and the double rôle played by England, forced the Bolsheviks to prepare with all haste for the end of the "breathing space." But the challenge to the Right—the international counter-revolution—meant also a challenge to the extreme Left, and particularly to those who were likely to put up a fight against labour discipline in the economic sphere. A beginning had already been made with the creation of a disciplined Red Army, to replace the disorganized and semi-independent bands that had defended the Revolution up till now. A nucleus of volunteers had appeared on May 1st at the great demonstration on the Khodinka Field outside Moscow. Since then Stekloff, the editor of the official *Izvestia*, had been running a series of articles, calling attention to the necessity to introduce, as foreshadowed in the "Declaration" of the Great Convention, compulsory military training for all workmen and labouring peasants, and compulsory labour without arms for all non-proletarians. At the same time a lively propaganda was set on foot against lack of discipline in the factories and on the railways and in favour of restriction of the right of the workers' committees in certain spheres of action.

The culminating point in this campaign was reached during the Congress of the Councils of Public Economy, which met in Moscow on May 27th. On this day I heard Lenin give the opening address to the Congress in the central hall of the Hôtel Metropole. The most important passage which struck me at the time was the following: "We know the general lines along which we can abolish private property and put an end to a public economy resting on a system of exploitation, but the specific means, the concrete measures, by which this is to be brought about are as yet unknown to us. Only the collective experience of the millions whom we have drawn into the government can enable us to solve the problem. It is our aim to find the correct place for each person in the general structure of society—a place which will be of the maximum value for the Republic. For this object we must set ourselves the task of making capitalist science

serviceable to us. We believe that the realization of Socialism is impossible without drawing to us the technical experts who once served the capitalists. Our task, of course, is made especially difficult on account of the relative backwardness of Russia. We are on the eve of a general reconstruction in the world economic system, and our attempt will never be forgotten. The most difficult of all our tasks at this Congress is to lay the foundation of a system of labour mobilization and labour discipline. The trade unions, factory committees and other bodies represented at this Congress must take this problem in hand at once. The passage from capitalism to a new order of society is bound to be long and complicated."

This address was the corollary of Lenin's thesis before the Central Soviet Executive three weeks earlier, and indicated in more practical language the lines along which the Bolshevik Party had in the meantime decided to try to influence the workers. This Congress of the Supreme Council of Public Economy was the first of its kind. We have seen in Chapter XIV that the first Council of Public Economy, which met in January, was composed of various odd bodies, hastily called together. It had decided to form economic councils in every province out of the local producers, consumers and technical organizations. The functions of these councils were to be for the present advisory only, their decisions being subject to workers' control through factory councils and to the veto of the local political Soviet. The Bolshevik Party, as Lenin clearly showed in his speech, intended this Congress of the provincial councils of public economy to have more than advisory powers and to assume definite authority in certain economic spheres. They were to be the organs for carrying through the new proletarian discipline. The Central Soviet Executive had placed before the Congress a number of problems, and after Lenin's speech the latter divided itself into commissions. In these commissions it was possible to see what chance the Bolsheviks had of putting their ideas through and what sort of opposition they were likely to meet.

In the Railway Commission, which was made up of delegates of the Railway Union, the shop committees and certain engineering specialists, I found there were numerous representatives of a new political party. It called itself the "Alliance of the Workers' Representatives."¹ It seems to have appeared at first among the railwaymen in the province of Tver, and then to have spread to other local centres. One of its leaflets, which I obtained, exhibited syndicalist tendencies, but there was a marked absence of

¹ In Russian, *Soyuz rabotchich upolnomochie*.

doctrinaire phrases, which seemed to indicate that the movement had sprung from below, and was not the result of agitation from above. I got the same impression after conversation with one of its members. He admitted that the movement was confined to certain branches of industry, chiefly to the rail shops, and that it was directed mainly against the threatened encroachments of the Bolshevik Party, the Commissars and the trade unions, which were falling under their influence, on the "independence of the workers," and on the "autonomy of the workers' committees." It was the same idea, expressed in practical language, which had inspired the Left Communists within the Bolshevik Party itself a month earlier. The Mensheviks were giving their support to the "Alliance of the Workers' Representatives," which seemed to justify Lenin in denouncing all these syndicalist and anti-discipline movements as infected with the spirit of "middle-class compromise."

The Railway Commission started work with a speech by a Bolshevik delegate, Koboseff, who complained of "anarcho-syndicalist movements among the railway workers," and spoke of the necessity of "Americanizing the railway administration," whereby greater centralization would cause greater efficiency—an indispensable necessity, in order to save the Revolution from going down in a sea of anarchy. On behalf of the opposition a delegate said that the "Americanizing" of the railways was inevitably bound up with capitalism and in conflict with the principles of the November Revolution, which gave power to the workers through their Soviets. Another speaker pointed out that the opposition was confounding capitalism in general with State capitalism, which was not necessarily the same thing. In Russia, he said, there could be nothing to fear in a bureaucracy, because that bureaucracy would no longer be working in the interests of a group of private banks, as in capitalist countries. The subsequent debate showed the cause of the suspicions which had been aroused in the railway world at the idea of central control. One speaker after another from the provinces pointed out the increasing pressure which was being put on the railway and shop men by the political Commissars and trade union officials. "Under Kerensky we used to take nine months to repair a boiler, but now there is trouble if the work takes over a hundred days," said one delegate from the provinces. After further discussion it was decided that a permanent Railway Commission of the Council of Public Economy should be formed, that it should have full powers to draw up the general plan of running the railways, and that its decisions, so far as they affected

purely administrative matters, should be binding on the local trade unions and shop committees. Thus the Bolsheviks secured their chief point, and the "Alliance of Workers' Representatives" had to be content with a promise that local workers' control over wages, insurance and food rations would be preserved. And amid the protests of the timid who declared that this was the beginning of the end of the Revolution, a commencement was made with the formation of a revolutionary bureaucracy to control production, distribution and transport.

A similar attempt was made by the Bolsheviks in the region of finance. Before a special commission Gukofsky read a report. The deficit for the first half-year of the November Revolution amounted to 15 milliard roubles. A considerable part of the outgoings, however, could justly be placed to capital account, for they represented advances to nationalized or controlled industries, which would bring in a return, provided that the Republic was permitted to remain in peace. The rest of the deficit would have to be made good by the issue of paper money and by taxation. Gukofsky strongly condemned the system of levying contributions on the bourgeoisie. This practice had been resorted to by the local Soviets without any system. Former members of the bourgeoisie had been arrested and kept in prison and ordered to pay fantastic sums, which they did not possess. Red Guard units made levies on the towns in which they were quartered, and spent the money without rendering any accounts to the centre. That anarchical system of finance must cease, said Gukofsky, and a responsible finance organ must be set up in every province of the Republic. He proposed that this finance organ should be empowered to levy direct taxation and excise duties not more than 20 per cent. above the same taxes levied by the municipal councils under Kerensky, and not more than 16 per cent. above those levied by the Zemstvos. In addition to this, extraordinary single-time taxes could be levied either in money or in kind, but only after sanction from the Financial Commission of the Supreme Council of Public Economy. Gukofsky's proposals met scarcely any opposition, for the people who had been and still were carrying on these requisitions and blackmailings were not represented at the Congress. They were for the most part Anarchist and Left S.R.'s who had got into the Red Guards. The problem of how to stop this undesirable feature of the Revolution was largely a problem of how to dissolve the Red Guards and to organize a disciplined Red Army.

In a further debate Lenin raised the question of liquidating the paper money issued since the March Revolution. Money,

he said, was only a symbol, and in a Socialist State, where no person was trying to live at the expense of his neighbour, it was necessary to establish a system of direct exchange. For this purpose the cheque system, working through a clearing house, such as the Supreme Council of Public Economy, would one day, when the struggle with the international counter-revolution was over, be all that was needed. They were, however, a long way from that yet.¹ In the meantime a beginning could be made by declaring the present currency invalid on a certain date and by ordering all the currency in circulation in the country to be delivered to the banks in exchange for coupons, which in future should serve for paper money. This, he said, would also enable a single-time levy to be made on all holders of paper money over a certain amount. This brilliant idea was accepted in principle, and a select committee was appointed to work out details. But Lenin's idea never saw its realization in practice. It was known that the kulaks and the "middle peasants" at this stage of the Revolution would never disgorge the contents of their coffers, which they were keeping in the backwoods, and which represented the profits made in speculation since the days when food began to get scarce in the towns. It would require a second agrarian revolution to get the contents of these coffers taxed.

In another commission, appointed by the Congress, the trade unions, factory committees and a number of political Commissars were considering the thorny question of the remuneration of labour and the means of raising its productivity and output. Here indeed was ground for a battle royal between those elements in the Revolution which were looking for centralization and discipline and those which were hankering after the days when every workmen's committee was a law unto itself. The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party was anxious at all costs to induce the trade unions and factory committees to take measures, in view of the grave dearth of food and materials, for raising the productivity of labour. Having overcome the fears of the Left Wing Communists in their own ranks, the Bolsheviks were not afraid of proposing to the Commission the introduction of piece-work, premiums and the Taylor system. Against these proposals a very strong objection was raised by an opposition group among the trade union delegates on the Commission. This group was led by Ryazanoff, who had until recently been a member of the Bolshevik Party. He had taken much interest in the trade

¹ This had much in common with the ideas of Robert Owen and the early English co-operators, who aimed at the payment of labour in tickets on a central co-operative store.

union movement in Russia and in Western Europe, and, being an admirer especially of English trade union practice during the latter part of the nineteenth century, he objected strongly to the policy of tampering with the "independence of the trade unions." He had been forced to leave the Bolshevik Party, for the Central Committee was making this question one of principle, being determined to get the trade unions under their control. Members of the "Alliance of Workers' Representatives" came to his support, and so also did delegates on the Commission who belonged to the Mensheviks and to Maxim Gorky's internationalist group.

For several days a big struggle went on in the Commission between these two points of view. The opposers of the Bolshevik propositions held that piece-work and the Taylor system were the very things which the workers through their trade unions in Western Europe had for decades been fighting. If the Soviets in Russia started to set up such a system, as soon as they came into power, they would, on the plea of raising production, be sacrificing all the conquests of the Revolution. The Taylor system especially, they said, was connected with the worst features of capitalist exploitation. It would have the effect of favouring the quick worker and straining the weak and slow worker to the breaking-point. "Do not, I beg you, comrades," said Ryazanoff with much warmth, "commit this terrible mistake, which the organized workers of Western Europe, with greater experience than you, have spent years in trying to avoid." Severoff, who followed in the same sense, proposed, in place of piece-work and the Taylor system, that a minimum of production should be established for each branch of industry, and that the trade unions and factory committees should be collectively responsible for this minimum production. This, he said, was the legitimate work of the trade unions. They should concern themselves with the technical side of their respective branches of industry, and should not be turned into gendarmes of the Soviet Government to enforce a certain system of production. That was the work of political bodies, but the trade unions must maintain their "independence."

This brought the Bolshevik leaders Milutin and Larin to their feet. What was this so-called trade union "independence"? Was it not just an excuse to use the trade unions as a cover for sabotaging economic reconstruction under the proletarian dictatorship. The trade unions in Western Europe were still fighting against an all-powerful capitalism, which was using piece-work, premiums and the Taylor system to sweat the workers in the

interest of profit. But what childishness to pretend that this was the situation in Russia! Was not the power of the capitalists overthrown? Were not the banks and chief industries now in the hands of the Soviets? How was it possible then to say that measures dictated by the imperative need for raising production were going to bring the workers back again under private exploitation?

Further, they pointed out that in the present state of industry in Russia, where the introduction of modern machinery and the dilution of labour as the result of the war were wide-spread phenomena, production depended no longer on the individual strength and gifts of each worker. Piece-work payments would not benefit the strongest, but the most conscientious worker. Moreover, the standard of output required from each branch of industry under the Taylor system would be fixed, not by the directors and managers, but by the trade unions and factory committees themselves, acting through the Council of Public Economy. The proposal to establish a minimum of production for each branch of industry, coupled with collective responsibility, could not meet the situation. First of all, the minimum would become a maximum, and the economic straits in which the Revolution found itself demanded an increase over the existing production. Secondly, collective discipline had already been tried in the five months since the November Revolution, and the semi-independent factory committees and provincial economic Soviets had shown themselves incapable of raising production. They must not close their eyes to unpleasant facts. The Revolution had failed to create individual discipline in each worker. This had got to be created, and the best and most thoroughly tested methods for ensuring this were piece-work and some form of the Taylor system. "Collective responsibility" must therefore be abolished.

After several days' discussion, the Bolshevik proposals were finally carried through the Commission. Their acceptance marked the first practical step towards the centralization of economic power and the militarizing of labour under the proletarian dictatorship. The threatening attitude of the international counter-revolution and of the German and Entente Imperialisms made the question of labour discipline and the raising of production a matter of life and death. Everyone felt that the "breathing space" was coming to an end, and the most far-sighted knew that every moment must be used to prepare for fresh trials ahead of the Revolution. But it would be a mistake to imagine that the victory of the disciplinarians and of the centralists at the

First Congress of the Councils of Public Economy was entirely due to the threat from the international Right. It was dictated equally by a desire to suppress the anarchical elements of the Left, which in various forms, under various names and through various parties, were undermining the economic foundations of the Republic. The Bolshevik Party was the only one in Russia at this time which had the courage to speak unpleasant truths and to tell the masses that, unless they buckled to and fought anarchy from the extreme Left with the same determination as they fought the international Right, the Revolution would go down through internal disruption. For this purpose they set themselves the task of capturing the economic organs of the masses, and through them of educating the masses to a realization of the fact that a social revolution meant not only the spoliation of the exploiters, but also the introduction of iron discipline into the ranks of the workers themselves.

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About a fortnight after the sittings of the Congress of the Councils of Public Economy, another important step was taken in the direction of consolidating and centralizing the economic organs of the Revolution. By decree of the Council of the People's Commissars on June 28th all the most important mining, engineering, electrical, textile, timber, chemical, leather, cement and milling companies, which for lack of a proper apparatus had not yet been nationalized, were now declared State property and put under a number of special commissions of the Council of Public Economy. This included all firms of one million capital and over. The technical staffs and specialists were to be given special representation on the Council of Public Economy. This measure was directed especially against the international Right, before all against German Imperialism. During April and May there had been wild speculation in Russian industrial shares on the German Bourses. The shares of Russian mines, metal and electrical industries were being bought up by subjects of the Central Powers. That agents of the Entente had a hand in the game there was also no doubt. For it came to my knowledge that Russian holders of industrial shares, who had sold out to Allied syndicates before the November Revolution, repurchased these shares after the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and sold them again to German banks. The transactions were in every case very cleverly masked by middlemen, but the fact was indisputable and was common talk in the Moscow Kremlin. International capital was attempting by every means to escape the proletarian

dictatorship and the inevitable nationalization without compensation, which was bound to come as soon as the Republic had an industrial administrative apparatus at its command. The decree of June 28th was drawn up at twenty-four hours' notice. The Council of the People's Commissars became aware of the fact that the German Ambassador was about to present a Note, stating that certain factories, which were not yet nationalized but were under State control, had been sold to German citizens, and were therefore exempt from the decrees of the Council of Public Economy. With feverish haste the political Commissariats and the various departments of the Council of Public Economy got to work, and after sitting up all night, produced next morning the decree with a list of the factories now declared to be owned and worked by the State. When Count Mirbach appeared to present his Note, he was forestalled by the official newspaper, *Izvestia*, which published next morning the full list of the new State factories. There was a slump in these shares on the Berlin Bourse. The holders of them knew that they would now have to depend on the German General Staff in the East if the decree of June 28th was to be annulled.

CHAPTER XIX

INTERNATIONAL COUNTER-REVOLUTION ASSUMES THE OFFENSIVE

THE "breathing space" came to a close sooner than even the most pessimistic in Moscow expected. On May 28th I learned, while I was attending the sitting of the Congress of Economic Councils, that serious news had come from the Don. Under the shadow of the German military occupation General Krasnoff, a former War Office official under the Tsar, had declared himself Ataman at the head of a Provisional All-Russian Government, and was marching north towards Moscow. The news caused great depression among all members of the Congress, for it was remembered that Krasnoff had been captured by the Red Guards when he led the assault on Petrograd under Kerensky in the first days of the November Revolution, and had been amnestied on condition that he promised not to raise arms again against the Soviet Republic. But the cup of the Revolution's woes was not yet filled, for news came on the following day that the Czecho-Slovak volunteers, who were supposed to be on their way across Russia to the Far East, had revolted at various points on the Siberian and Ryazan railways, and seized Pensa and Tchelyabinsk, and had deposed the Soviets.

No one seemed to know the reason for these sudden revolts, but the fact that they took place simultaneously at different points on the periphery of the Republic gave rise to suspicions that the conspiracy was widespread and international in character. On May 30th martial law was declared in Moscow, and in the principal towns in the south and south-east. Everywhere the middle-class press was closed and their printing presses occupied by Red Guards. Up till now all the well-known middle-class newspapers which used to appear under Tsarism, like the *Russkoye Slovo*, the *Retch*, the *Russkoye Viedomost*, etc., enjoyed the same rights under the Soviet regime. Occasionally during the previous five months they had been suppressed for a few days or ordered to pay money fines for publishing false or malicious statements

against the Soviet regime. But with this exception there had been no interference with the right of free expression of opinion in the Republic. Now, however, the time had apparently come when the counter-revolution was assuming the offensive, and when fuller powers would have to be taken under the dictatorship of the proletariat to defend the Revolution.

On the same day we learned more fully the nature of the conspiracy, which stood behind Krasnoff and the Czecho-Slovaks. In the official *Izvestia* there appeared a statement by the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution, which threw much light on what had hitherto been unknown to the general public. The following is a short résumé of this statement: Since the defeat of Kerensky's attempt to march on Petrograd and the break-up of Dukhonin's General Staff at Mogilieff, the "Committee for the Defence of the Country and of Freedom," round which all anti-Soviet elements in Russia centred, had made Moscow its secret headquarters. Up till the first week in May it had been hoped to organize a rebellion in Moscow by bribing the commanders of the Lettish volunteers, who formed the most reliable element in the Red Guard. This, however, had been found impossible to achieve, and the headquarters of the "Committee" had been removed to Kieff. This, however, necessitated that the anti-Soviet elements should come to some arrangement with the German military authorities, who were all-powerful there. Signs of differences of opinion at once began to appear. One group in the "Committee" favoured close co-operation with Prussian militarism against the Soviets, whereas the other group maintained that it was dangerous to compromise the "Committee" with the Central Powers, because this would injure the chances of a favourable arrangement with the Allies in the event of their victory. The "Committee" therefore broke up into these two groups. One calling itself the "Right Centre" remained under the Germans in Kieff, and the other calling itself the "National Centre," under the guidance of General Alexcieff, migrated to the Kuban steppes of the North Caucasus, in the hopes of establishing contact with the Allies through Persia. These two groups, however, continued to exchange information. The difference of opinion was only tactical and was concerned with the estimate of the probable outcome of the struggle on the plains of France. About this time also it was observed that the Cadets and a number of officers of the Tsar's army began to get the upper hand in the councils of the Russian counter-revolutionaries. The Right S.R.'s, who had taken such an active part in the fight against the Soviets in the first days of the

November Revolution, began now to play a more subordinate rôle. The Mensheviks were no longer in the "Committee," but maintained "neutrality" outside. About the middle of May the Cadets in Kieff became the driving force of the pro-German "Right Centre." M. Miliukoff, who was at that moment in the Ukraine, had had several conversations with high German officers in Kieff, and the Cadet party in the Ukraine had decided to work for the creation of a "National Russian Government" in South Russia, which was to use the German military occupation as its protection in carrying out the mobilization of a Russian army for the invasion of North Russia and for the overthrow of the Soviet Government. Also on the Don the All-Russian Party among the Cossack officers had got the upper hand over the All-Cossack Party, the ablest spokesman of which had been the late General Kaledin. It was in the light of these decisions of the Cadets in the Ukraine and of the activities of the "Right Centre" that the *coup d'état* of General Krasnoff was to be regarded. On the other hand, the "National Centre," under the leadership now of pro-Ally Cadets, was engaged in recruiting officers in Central and Northern Russia and in bringing them down to the North Caucasus and Volga provinces. It was in relation to these facts that the revolt of the Czecho-Slovaks in the east and south-east must be considered.

The publication of this statement by the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution caused a great sensation. It prepared revolutionary opinion for the struggle, which was seen now to be imminent. Even more important, however, was the information, which was not generally available at the time, but which was published later, comprising certain data about the activities of the agents of the Allies in South East Russia.¹ Certain important telegrams passing between the French Military Mission in Moscow and its agents in the provinces were intercepted by the Extraordinary Commission. One ciphered and dated May 17, 1918, from Samara to the Mission was signed "Vanno," and read: "All Cossack delegates arrived Samara ask for money and are ready march against Soviets and Germans. Please send reply." Another one, also ciphered and dated June 3, 1918, Vladikavkas, North Caucasus, to Mission, and signed "Chardigny," reads as follows: "I am placed in unique position here from point of view of defence of the front against the Germans and the

¹ See *Correspondence diplomatique se rapportant aux relations entre la République Russe et les Puissances de l'Entente*, published by the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 1919, pp. 19, 20.

Mahommedans, but for this it is necessary to get support from Cossacks. Up to the present England has not taken up any attitude. I consider that the Rostoff-Kuban front ought to be under our control, England remaining on the Terek. In this case I ask for instructions and should like to know on what credits I can rely."

It was thus clear that during May the French Military Mission in Russia was taking steps to win over the "National Centre" in the North Caucasus to a definitely anti-German policy and to the re-establishment of the front against the Germans in the East and for an advance against Moscow. The difficulties in the way were, first, the fear of the "National Centre" of breaking with the Germans and with the "Right Centre" in Kieff, and, second, the passivity of the Kuban and Terek Cossacks, who were interested only in settling their age-long land feud with the Moslem mountain tribes. The Volunteer Army under General Alexeieff, based on Ekaterinodar, was meanwhile being recruited out of the remnants of Korniloff's detachments, which had taken refuge there after the dispersal of the General Staff at Mogilieff* and out of new arrivals secretly escaped from Moscow and Petrograd. But the Volunteer Army, too, was holding itself passive, and would not compromise itself by coming out against the Germans. Nor was Alexeieff able at this time to persuade all his supporters to adopt a definitely All-Russian policy. For this it was necessary to find an agent who would create a *fait accompli*. The French Military Mission had an agent at hand. It had taken under its protection the Czecho-Slovak volunteers, former deserters from the Austrian Army, whom it had, after much difficulty with the Tsar's Government, organized as a force to fight the Germans. After the November Revolution these volunteers were left high and dry, and two alternatives were before the French Mission. Either it could transfer the Czecho-Slovaks to the west front, or else it could use them to suppress the Soviets and re-establish the east front.

After examining all the evidence connected with the conflict between the Czecho-Slovak volunteers in Russia and the Soviet Government, I am convinced that the former were nothing more than unconscious tools of French militarism in the East, which was exploiting to its own advantages the strong anti-Austrian and patriotic sentiments of these Czecho-Slovak exiles. As proof of this I may record the fact that important documents, bearing on the relations between the Czecho-Slovak National Council

* Korniloff had been killed in April, 1918, during an unsuccessful attempt to take Ekaterinodar from the Bolsheviks.

and the Allies during the war, were discovered by the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution in June of 1918 in Moscow. After the seizure of Pensa and Tchelyabinsk by the Czecho-Slovak legions, the Soviet authorities searched the premises of the Moscow branch of the Czecho-Slovak National Council. In this bureau they found the correspondence, which had been going on during 1917 and the first part of 1918, between President Masaryk and Dr. Maksa, President of the Moscow Czecho-Slovak National Council.¹ The correspondence disclosed the fact that during 1917 secret negotiations for a separate peace had been going on between the Allies and Austria with a view to secure the isolation of Germany. Austria was attempting to get, as one of the conditions of a separate peace, the recognition of the principle that Czecho-Slovakia was an integral part of the Dual Monarchy. This news greatly alarmed the National Council in Paris and Moscow, for it was realized that this would jeopardize their hopes for the independence of Czecho-Slovakia. During the summer of 1917 Masaryk emphasized in communications with Maksa in Moscow that the situation in Paris was very dangerous for the future of Czecho-Slovakia, which was constantly on the point of being sacrificed by the Allies to plans of a separate peace with Austria. After the November Revolution the French Military Mission in Russia seems to have taken the initiative in opening negotiations with the Czecho-Slovak National Council. The French military agents in Russia knew that the independence of Czecho-Slovakia had not been definitely decided upon in Paris, because the hope of drawing Austria out of the Central Alliance was not yet abandoned. They therefore played upon this uncertainty and on the fears of the National Council in Moscow to levy blackmail on the Czecho-Slovak volunteers. In a memorandum of the Council describing the negotiations between Dr. Maksa and the head of the French Military Mission in Moscow, the latter is stated to have hinted that the Czecho-Slovak volunteers must do something in Russia to assist in the re-establishment of the eastern front against the Germans, if they wished to guarantee the independence of the Bohemian state. On hearing of this Masaryk, who was in London at the time, telegraphed to the National Council in Moscow, asking

¹ I had occasion to read a summary of this correspondence in December 1919, when the material was about to be brought forward at the trial in Prague for high treason of the Czech Communist leader in Russia, Muna. The trial, however, never took place and Muna was released on political considerations. The full texts of the documents were never brought before the public. I, however, sent a short summary of the contents of the documents to the *Daily Herald*, which was printed on January 7, 1920.

them to postpone taking such a grave step until he had made further representations to the Allies. What Masaryk said to the Allies in the West is not related in the documents, but he was clearly unsuccessful in his attempt to get the unconditional recognition of the independence of Czecho-Slovakia. The French bondholders demanded Czecho-Slovak cannon fodder for the overthrow of the Soviet Republic, which had dared to cancel Tsarist debts. If the Czecho-Slovaks wanted their independence recognized by a Government that was "fighting for the liberty of small nationalities," those were the conditions. The Czecho-Slovak leaders' patriotism overcame their better human feelings, and Masaryk felt constrained to inform Maksa that it was necessary to take all steps to secure the recognition of the Czecho-Slovak State. Shortly after this communication the Pensa and Tchelyabinsk risings took place.

Further evidence of the secret understanding which was arrived at between the Allies and the Czecho-Slovak National Council is furnished by an interesting document, discovered by the Extraordinary Commission at Samara after the reoccupation of the latter by the Soviet forces in the autumn of 1918. It is a proclamation of the Siberian section of the Czecho-Slovak National Council to their military forces at the front in East Russia, and runs as follows :

SAMARA, *September 9, 1918.*

The Siberian section of the Czecho-Slovak National Council informs all fellow citizens at the front that it has just received a telegram, giving the text of a conversation which has passed between the commander of the Vladivostock forces, General Diederichs, and the commander of the Czecho-Slovak forces, Colonel Gaida. Professor Masaryk has sanctioned our activities in Siberia and Russia, and the Allies have now agreed to recognize the Czecho-Slovak National Council as the constitutional Government of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. The Allies have also decided to assist us, and English, American, French and Japanese troops have landed in the Far East under the command of the Japanese Marshal, Otani.

(Signed on behalf of the Siberian section of the Czecho-Slovak National Council.)

Dr. PATEIDEL.

Secretary : RICHTER.

The French Military Mission had laid its plans well. Just before the rising it had paid out, through the French Consul in Moscow, 11 million roubles to the Czecho-Slovak National Council, and the British Consul in Moscow had paid out £80,000.* The money was paid to members of the National Council, M. Shiep and M. Bogumiltchermak, and through their hands

* This statement was published in the Czecho-Slovak Communist organ, *Prokupiik Svobod*, in Moscow on June 27, 1918, on the basis of documents discovered in the bureau of the National Council.

it went to the commanders of the Czecho-Slovak detachments in various parts of Russia. The money was immediately used for the purpose of increasing the pay of the officers and men. The minds of the Czecho-Slovak soldiers had been carefully prepared by propaganda from the French Military Mission to the effect that the Soviet Government had refused to allow them to return to France, and was about to deliver them over to the Austrian military authorities, who would hang them all as deserters. Like hunted animals at bay, the volunteers struck, and it was not an accident that the places where they happened to strike were along the lines of the Volga and the Siberian railway, thus cutting off Central Russia from its last corn reserve. It only required an Allied or anti-Soviet force on the shores of the White Sea to almost complete the ring running from the far North to the North Caucasus and the mouth of the Don, hemming in Soviet Russia on the east and re-establishing the eastern front against the Germans. The French Mission's plans were maturing. Their agents, in all the places where the Czecho-Slovak volunteers had seized the railway stations, gathered round themselves the members of the "National Centre" and of the Right S.R.'s, who had formed themselves now into an independent committee of members of the Right wing of the Constituent Assembly, and called themselves the "Committee for the Rebirth of Russia." The Right S.R.'s had at this time considerable support from the rich and influential farmer and kulak class in the south-east and Volga provinces. From the point of view, therefore, of securing a suitable political background for the revolt against the Soviet, the places where the Czecho-Slovaks had been induced to strike had been well chosen by the French Mission. The provinces of Western Siberia along the railway and the provinces of Samara, Ufa and parts of Saratoff contained a large section of the rich farmer class, who, as I have explained elsewhere, had interests economically conflicting with those of the landless immigrants and wage-earning *batraki* from the over-populated parts of North Russia. They had been the mainstay of the Right S.R.'s in the elections for the Constituent Assembly, and hated the food and horse requisitions which the Soviet authorities were making in their districts, in order to make good the losses due to the German occupation of the Ukraine. Here was a Vendée indeed—a fertile soil for anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda. The French Mission could easily turn the kulaks' hatred of Communist Moscow and Petrograd into hatred of those who had made the Peace of Brest-Litovsk. Moreover, these rich farmers had to a large extent succeeded in getting

control of the Soviets in the south-east provinces. Though often in a minority, they controlled the Soviets through their wealth and influence. Thus the poor immigrant element and the local *batraki* were for the most part disarmed and unable to provide an effective support in these districts for the Central Soviets in Moscow and Petrograd.

The Czecho-Slovak rising along the Volga and the Siberian railway had an immediate effect on Alexeieff's Volunteer Army in the North Caucasus and brought the All-Russian element, which stood for an immediate march on Moscow, to the fore. But there were difficulties in securing equipment for the advance away on the Kuban and Terek steppes. The Ententophils of the "National Centre" were placed in a serious predicament, for the Entente could not send them any material assistance across Persia, and the Black Sea was closed by the Turks. They could only get what they needed from the German General Staff on the Don and in the Ukraine. The latter, with their protégés the "Right Centre" at Kieff and General Krasnoff at Novo-Tcherkask, were at this same time also preparing for an advance north to Moscow to make an end of the "Leninite regime," in spite of the protests of the German diplomats, who considered the time not yet ripe to openly tear up the Brest-Litovsk Peace. That the German military party was prepared to offer assistance to Alexeieff's Volunteer Army in the North Caucasus, and that this army did, in spite of its professed Ententophilism on the quiet accept this assistance is now shown to have been the case.¹ Thus in June 1918 one had the extraordinary spectacle of German and pro-German Russian forces, Czecho-Slovak and pro-Entente Russian forces gathering together in one large semi-circle round Soviet Russia from the Volga to the Ukraine. The pro-Entente elements justified the advance against Moscow on the ground that they were establishing a front against the German element of the semicircle. The German element justified its advance on the ground that it was establishing a front against the pro-Entente elements of the semicircle. Although they would not admit it at the time, both the Allies and the Central Powers were assisting each other in following their real object, which was the overthrow of the Soviet Republic. As the official Soviet organ, *Izvestia*, pointed out in its leader for June 5th, the Allies and the Central Powers were like two lions hunting the same antelope and half-consciously assisting each other in surrounding their prey. That they would have quarrelled over the prey, if they caught it, was

¹ See article by a "member of the German General Staff in the East," published in the Berlin militarist organ, *Der Tag*, for December 12, 1919.

of course, exceedingly probable. But the prey was not going to be caught so easily.

During the first week of June a general offensive began against the Soviets. General Krasnoff with Don Cossacks, armed and equipped with German war material and with German officers directing the operations, advanced north and attacked Tsaritzin on the Volga. At the same time the Czecho-Slovaks, under French officers, who had in the last days of May occupied Syzran, moved on Samara. The Red Guards in Samara were cut off from connection with Central Russia, and Orenburg Cossack detachments, hastily mobilized by Ataman Dutoff and armed by the French Military Mission, threatened them in the rear. At the first assault of the Czecho-Slovak force coming from the West, they turned tail and fled. The Soviet in Samara was immediately deposed, and the Right S.R.'s with the "Committee for the Rebirth of Russia" and the Right wing members of the Constituent Assembly for the south-eastern provinces set themselves up as the "Provisional All-Russian Government" in Samara. A general mobilization was declared for a "National Army" to advance on Moscow and re-establish the eastern front against the Germans. The Allied Consuls in Samara accorded to this Government full recognition. Meanwhile the pro-German Krasnoff, with his Cossacks and German officers, was advancing on Tsaritzin. This town had been since the early days of the March Revolution a stronghold of the Communists, who found their support in the numerous transport workers on the Volga. The latter were hastily armed into Red battalions and beat off the attack of the German hirelings. There was thus a narrow strip of territory left between the forces of the pro-German Krasnoff and the pro-Entente Czecho-Slovaks and Dutoff Cossacks. This strip included the Volga between Tsaritzin and Kamishin, and to these points the Central Soviet Executive in Moscow decided to send reinforcements of the workmen's battalions.

On June 6th I visited the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and saw Radek, who was in charge of the Central European department. He was very well informed about the relations between the Czecho-Slovak legions and the Allied Military Missions. There were, he said, a number of Socialist Internationalist and Communist members among the Czecho-Slovaks, and some of these had been present when officers of the French Military Mission had laid before the Czecho-Slovak officers the full plans for the overthrow of the Soviet Republic. These Internationalists and Communists had now formed special

Czecho-Slovak Red battalions, who were being sent against their erring brothers. "But," added Radek, "although we are determined to disarm the Czecho-Slovak volunteers before allowing them to leave Russia, we intend, wherever possible, to do this by peaceful persuasion. We have sent our Czech Internationalist friends to explain the situation and to propose to the volunteers that, after disarming, they should either go abroad, by whichever route they please, as private individuals, or else remain in Russia, in which case they will be offered useful work of public importance. The Soviet Government is also ready to consult the Allies on the question of the future of the Czecho-Slovaks. One thing, however, we will not endure, and that is that Soviet Russia should become a prey to any military adventurer who gets enough foreign money and machine-guns. Precisely because we know that the Allied Military Missions have been trying to use the Czecho-Slovaks for subversive purposes, we have decided to insist upon disarming them. If the Allies are really so anxious to get the Czecho-Slovaks out of Russia, why do they hold up transport in Vladivostock and refuse to allow some 10,000 Czecho-Slovaks, who have already arrived there, to depart for the West?"

On the same day I telegraphed an account of this conversation to the *Manchester Guardian*, but the message was suppressed by the military censors of the Allies, while rumours which were being put about by agents of the Allied Military Missions were passed through to Helsingfors and cabled from there to the Allied press. These rumours described the "Bolshevik-German plot" and gave details of friendly interviews between Lenin and the Kaiser and arrangements for handing the Czecho-Slovaks over to the Austrians. To messages of this kind the Allied censors had no objection. The international conspiracy against the Soviet Republic was deepening.

On June 11th the Czecho-Slovaks advanced up the Volga in the direction of Simbirsk, and in the meantime the Allies, through their unofficial representatives in Moscow and through their Military Missions, declared that they had taken the Czecho-Slovaks under their protection. In view of the seriousness of the situation, I drew up and sent the following telegram to the *Manchester Guardian*:

"The last ten days have shown that the task before the Soviet Government in maintaining order in the country and suppressing anarchy has become more and more difficult. The events taking place on the Volga and along the Siberian Railway are a clear proof that the Czecho-Slovak forces are not engaged

in innocent self-protection from Bolshevik terrorism. It is significant that in every town to which they come in East Russia and Siberia they arrest the local Soviets and set up an authority, relying upon the Cadets, Right S.R.'s and Cossack officers. When at the same time the French Military Missions and diplomatic representatives of the Allies here take the Czecho-Slovaks under their protection, as they are doing, it is clear that they are supporting rebellion against the Soviet authority and financing anarchy in the country. They cannot, therefore, now sanctimoniously pretend that they are not interfering in Russia's internal affairs and are not helping one of the two class forces in the country against the other. We are informed by cables from London here that the the Allies cannot either *de facto* or *de jure* recognize the Soviet Government because it represents only one class in the community. Is one to assume, then, that the Allies will decline to recognize either *de facto* or *de jure* a Russian Government, consisting of landlords, bankers, rich peasants and their intellectual servants, who call themselves 'democrats,' because they, too, represent only one class? Yet that is exactly what they are doing when they recognize the Government set up on the Volga by the Czecho-Slovaks. The Allies may pretend that they are setting up some National Coalition Government, including everyone from landlords to Bolsheviks, to fight against German Imperialism. No one here, not even the bitterest anti-Bolshevik, takes this seriously. Moreover, the fate of Kerensky is a sufficient proof of the impossibility of this sort of Government. It would be like asking the British Socialist Party to enter Lloyd George's War Cabinet, or the German Independent Socialists to become colleagues of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. On the other hand, if the Allies set up in Russia a Government only of the Right, which does as every Government of this kind must do, viz., protect the interests of its class—the landlords, bankers and property owners—the workers, who are now discontented with the Soviet Government, because of the famine, and the peasants, who dislike the forced requisitions, will become doubly so against the Allies. Thus the ground will be prepared for another, much more violent revolution. The example of the Ukraine is only a case in point, where the peasants are rising, after a few weeks of German occupation, in rebellion against the Skoropadsky dictatorship of the big landlords. The rising in the Ukraine is not a national but a class rising, and the same thing would happen in any district in Russia in which the Allies set up a Government of Cadets and landlords under a 'democratic' title. The days of Coalition National Governments in Russia are gone, and the

capitalist lion can no longer lie down with the proletarian lamb, except under one condition, namely, that the lamb shall be inside. If the Allies intend to set up in Russia a Government of Cadets, landlords and property owners with their intellectual supporters, their protégé may be very imposing, but like the Government of Skoropadsky in the Ukraine, set up by the Prussianism which they imitate, it will be a Colossus with feet of clay. Those who touch the conquests of the Revolution will only add fuel to the Bolshevik flame, which, driven underground, will break out with greater violence later."

I sent this telegram in a desperate attempt to rouse the Labour and democratic forces in England to the seriousness of the situation into which the Allies were allowing themselves to drift in regard to Russia. The message, by some lucky chance, escaped the censorship of the Allies and appeared in the *Manchester Guardian* a few days later. On June 19th I received a telegram from the editor asking me to find out whether the Soviet Government was prepared to enter into economic relations with England, what it could offer and what were its main requirements. I saw M. Tchitcherin next day and communicated to him the contents of the telegram. The Commissar for Foreign Affairs then made to me the following statement :

"The Soviet Republic is being threatened now by the hostile forces of two coalitions, which, whether they intend to or not, are, in fact, mutually assisting one another. As regards the Central Powers, it appears that diplomatic Germany is aiming at cutting off the corn lands of the south from Muscovite Russia, and is trusting to famine to undermine the authority of the Soviet Government, which it can then overthrow by means of General Krasnoff's Cossacks. The Soviet Government will not break the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, but, if driven to bay, will not shrink from an open rupture with Berlin. If the other Coalition, the Allies, seriously intend to parry the blow which the German General Staff is preparing for Russia, then the first practical step which they must take is to recognize the *de facto* Government of Russia. The second step they can take is to give us economic assistance by helping to re-establish industrial and agricultural productivity in the country. We know the difficulties of the Allies in respect of tonnage, and we cannot expect shipments of food to our starving northern districts, but we would ask of them shipments of agricultural implements and machinery for repairing our railways. The Soviet Government would be ready to give compensation for these services in certain raw materials, of which we still have large stocks, and in concessions of forests and rail-

way construction in the northern districts about which details would have to be arranged. We have already made an offer to Germany to treat on this basis and to America through Colonel Robins, who is now on his way home. We have not yet made a similar offer to England, because we do not know whether the good words of Mr. Lockhart to us represent the views of the British Government or only his own. Nevertheless, I may add that the conditions offered to England will not differ in principle from those offered to Germany and to the United States. It is necessary, however, to add that we shall in no circumstances permit the workers and peasants of Russia to be made cannon fodder for the Allies."

It may be noted here that the Soviet Government's offer to open up economic relations with England, as contained in my interview with the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, dated as far back as the summer of 1918. How often was that very offer repeated through the rest of that and the following two years! Its genuineness was corroborated by the British Consul at this time in Archangel, Douglas Young, who in a letter to *The Times* on December 14, 1918, in reply to Admiral Kemp, wrote: "They [the Bolsheviks] were ready until the last to come to an arrangement with us on the basis of an exchange of goods, but they would not sell their birthright—their right to resist our landing except it were done at their invitation—for an Allied mess of pottage, the food of which they were in sore need." Nine days later (June 29th) an English Economic Commission arrived in Moscow from the Murman with power to discuss the possibilities of an economic treaty with Soviet Russia. It was evident that the voice of reason had, for a brief spell at least, prevailed in London. But it was soon drowned by the rattle of the sabre. On the following day I went round to the Hôtel Elite to see a member of the Commission whom I knew, and was told that the Commission, twenty-four hours after its arrival, had received a wire that it was to return at once to the Murman and to postpone the negotiations *sine die*. That very night we heard in Moscow that Allied troops had landed on the Murman and had declared the Murman Soviet to be "independent of the Soviet authority in Petrograd and Moscow." This clearly proved that those in London who had been responsible for sending the Economic Commission to Moscow had been overridden by some other group in the Allied camp. It was not difficult to see that the same people, whose orders the French Military Mission in Moscow was obeying when it engineered the Czecho-Slovak revolt, were also responsible for the forging of this new link

in the chain which had closed round the Soviet Republic. For the occupation of the Murman closed the last outlet to the outer world. The Soviet Republic was now isolated.

An entirely false impression has been created by the official accounts of the North Russian expedition. The despatches of Lord Rawlinson, extracts from which were published in the English press recently,¹ try to make it appear that the Allies went to the Murman coast at the direct request of the Soviet Government, and that, having landed there, were treacherously attacked by the Red Guards and ordered by the Council of the People's Commissars to clear out again. It was true that in May the Council of the People's Commissars connived at an arrangement entered into between the Murman Soviet and the Allied naval authorities, by which the Murman coast should be kept free of German submarines and White Finnish bands. During the month of May my attention was more than once called to the favourable attitude of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow to the idea of British naval assistance in preserving the neutrality of the Murman. If this attitude had been encouraged, the Allies might have secured all that they professed to demand, namely, the prevention of the creation of a German submarine base in those waters. But as soon as news arrived that an Allied military force had landed at Murman and was marching inland in the direction of Kem and Petrograd, this attitude completely changed.

Matters soon went from bad to worse, and on July 11th the official *Izvestia* published the following statement: "In the last few days the situation on the Murman has assumed the form of an open war between the Allied forces and the Soviet Government. British, French and Serbian troops have pushed inland and have occupied the railway between Murman and Soroka. Yesterday they advanced eleven versts south of Soroka. Along the whole length of the way the Allied troops have established their control, and all who have disobeyed their orders have been shot. At Kem the Serbian soldiers, at the order of the British commandant, shot three members of the local Soviet, comrades Malicheff, Kameneff and Vitsun. Gerasimoff, the political Commissar, was arrested. Soroka was taken by the British after a naval bombardment." The statement about the shootings at Kem was denied by the British representative in Moscow, Mr. Lockhart, but a subsequent inquiry made on the spot by delegates sent from Archangel confirmed it. The *Izvestia*, on July 30th, printed the report of the Archangel Soviet delegates,

¹ See *The Times*, April 9, 1920.

which contained the following passage : " The Allied representatives at Kem assured us that our dead comrades resisted the Allies' advance by force and were killed in fighting, but we have eye-witnesses who state the contrary." Again, in a telegram to the American Ambassador, Mr. Francis, in Vologda, Tchitcherin, after recalling these facts, added : " These movements of the Allied troops in North Russia have no connection with the German menace through Finland, which lies to the south-west of the Murman. These movements are directed to the south-east of the Murman, towards the heart of Soviet Russia, and are an open declaration of war on the Soviet Republic." *

The official explanation, served out at the time in England to the public, was that the Soviet Government had concluded a treaty with the White Finnish Government, under which Russia ceded to Finland the whole of the Petcheneg peninsula and the Murman coast. It was contended that, inasmuch as the White Finnish Government was a tool of the German General Staff, the Allies were justified in assuming that the Soviet Government had the intention of handing the coast over to the Germans. Moreover, it was added, the Soviet authorities had removed coal from these parts and were selling it to the Germans. The last statement was absurd, for not only was there no coal in North Russia to remove to Germany, but the Germans actually, under a special economic agreement in the autumn of 1918, before their break-up, exported two cargoes of coal to Petrograd for North Russia. As regards the supposed treaty between the Soviet Government and White Finland, I found out the truth about this in a conversation with Radek on June 10th. His account was : " The Soviet Government ceded the western part of the Petcheneg peninsula to the Revolutionary Government of Finland in February 1918. That Government no longer exists, and in its place is the White Government of Finland, with which the Soviet Government, though not in a state of war, has not yet concluded a formal peace. As soon as the Red Government of Finland was overthrown, the Soviet Government declared the treaty, ceding the west part of the Petcheneg to Finland, no longer valid. In any treaty which may be made between the Soviet Government and the White Government of Finland, the whole question will be reviewed. Negotiations have not yet commenced, because of the behaviour of the German General Staff in the East, which is sending submarines round to the Murman and making the coast insecure, thus practically blockading us. Against this the Soviet Government has energetic-

* See *Correspondence Diplomatique*, etc., Com. F.A., Moscow, 1919, p. 27.

ally protested and has warned the German Government that it reserves freedom of action to invite any third Power to assist it in protecting the neutrality of the Murman. The action, however, of the Allies excludes the possibility that they may be the third party." The substance of this conversation I put into a telegram and sent to the *Manchester Guardian*, but again the Allied censors apparently considered that the most important part of its contents, relating to the desire of the Soviets to secure the neutrality of the Murman and to the possibility of the assistance of the Allies in this aim, must not be published "in view of military considerations."

During the last half of June a big press campaign was started in the Allied countries through the official press agencies, with a view to showing that the Czecho-Slovaks were fighting against forces of German and Austrian prisoners, who were supposed to be preventing them from reaching Vladivostock. Almost daily the Havas agency was giving out messages which were said to have been received from Siberia, via Japan, stating that German prisoners in Irkutsk, led by German officers, had revolted, defeated the Soviet troops and seized authority in Eastern Siberia, with the object of preventing the Czecho-Slovaks from leaving the country. On June 25th I saw Tchitcherin at the Foreign Office, and he set before me a telegram which the Council of the People's Commissars had just received from the Irkutsk Soviet. This telegram described the general situation in Eastern Siberia. In spite of the revolt of the Czecho-Slovaks in Western Siberia and along the Volga, everything was quiet in the Far East. The Soviet authority was as firm as ever, the Semeonoff forces in the Trans-Baikal had retreated over the Manchurian frontier, and the German and Austrian prisoners were unarmed in their concentration camps. The German Ambassador in Moscow had sent agents down there to try and get them transported to Germany to serve in the German army. A certain number were ready to go; many others wanted to remain prisoners, as they were better off in Siberia; some others were Internationalists and had accepted Russian citizenship. These were being permitted to enter the Red Army, which was being formed in Eastern Siberia. Up to the present these did not amount to more than three battalions. Some of the Hungarian Communists had formed a special corps and had threatened to shoot the German and Austrian agents sent to bring the prisoners back to Europe.¹ I sent extracts of the report of the Irkutsk Soviet

¹ The same thing was reported by the American Military Attaché in Peking, Walter Drysdell, who was sent by the Allies themselves to inquire

in a telegram to the *Manchester Guardian* on June 25th, but the telegram was suppressed by the Allied censor, who had an interest in permitting only the provocative falsehoods disseminated from Paris to reach the ear of the public.

The above events had a profound effect on revolutionary opinion, above all on the working classes of Petrograd and Moscow. On July 1st I was present at a full gathering of the Moscow Soviet and of the Moscow Trade Union Council in the old Hall of the Nobility. Trotsky made a report on the military situation on the fronts against the Czecho-Slovaks, Krasnoff's pro-German bands and the Franco-British forces that had landed at Murman. Red workmen's battalions, he said, were being sent from Petrograd against the Franco-British, for the Soviet Republic would not tolerate these foreign White Guards wandering about the borders of Russia. It was necessary to get to work immediately at the task of dissolving the undisciplined Red Guards, which had been formed at the commencement of the Revolution for work no longer required, and to embody them into a disciplined Red Army under commanders responsible to the Central Soviet authority. They must not be frightened at the word discipline, which was the necessary corollary of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and without which the international capitalist conspiracy against the Russian Revolution could not be crushed. They had to build up a Red Army which would show the world that Russian workers and peasants could defend themselves against a world of exploiters in arms against them. They had to give that army material support, technique, a moral basis and a tradition. The Prussian army had been built up by generations of hard work and military tradition. The youth of Germany had been educated to regard the Prussian army as an instrument of power for the honour and glorification of the Hohenzollerns. In this way the Junkers and capitalists of Germany had bound the German masses to their war chariots and held them in economic slavery. "Let us from this day forth," said Trotsky, "set ourselves the task of building up another great army. Let us educate the youth of the Russian workers and peasants to regard the profession of bearing arms to defend their Socialist fatherland as the most honourable that a man can be called upon to perform. Let us have our military traditions, not for the perpetuation of the power of the exploiters, but for the glory of the international solidarity of the workers of all lands."

into the condition of the German and Austrian prisoners' camps in Siberia as early as March 1918. See *Correspondance Diplomatique*, 1918, Com. F.A., Moscow, 1919, pp. 4, 5.

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On hearing these words, the whole company of Moscow working men rose from their seats and cheered to the echo. The first mobilization order was issued that day for two years of working men reservists for the Moscow industrial area. Twenty-four hours later I was informed that 80 per cent. of those on the register had reported and were being consigned to camps and barracks. Among the workers of the industrial centres the new watchword was "centralization and militarization." I wondered, as I left the Hall of the Nobility, if the Revolution was entering a Napoleonic phase.

CHAPTER XX

SECOND AGRARIAN REVOLUTION—BOLSHEVIKS SUPPRESS THE LEFT SOCIALIST REVOLU- TIONARIES

THE iron ring, which had now closed round the Soviet Republic, deprived her famishing towns of their last corn reserve. In the previous year (1917) the total harvest for all Russia had been 881 million pouds, a reduction of about one-third on the average pre-war harvest. Of this the Ukraine had accounted for 510 million pouds. Now the industrial districts of North and Central Russia lived solely on the surplus corn, which in normal times they were able to obtain from the southern, south-eastern and eastern provinces in exchange for manufactures of all kinds. The care with which the German Imperialists cut off the greatest corn reserve of Russia at Brest-Litovsk was an indication, not only of their own needs, but also of their intention to throttle the economic life of the Soviet Republic. In spite of this there were in the summer of 1918 371 million pouds of corn, which were left over from the previous year, in territories outside the German occupation. In Western Siberia and the North Caucasus there were roughly 201 million pouds, in the Lower Volga provinces 132 million pouds, while in the southern part of the Central provinces themselves there still remained 51 million pouds.¹ The events of June, however, had destroyed the last hope of feeding the starving towns of the north and centre with corn reserves from Siberia, the North Caucasus and the Lower Volga provinces. The French Military Mission and the Allied War Council in Paris had taken care that the work of bringing the Republic to its knees by starvation, begun by the German Imperialists, should be continued by the Allies. For this was the direct result of the Czecho-Slovak revolt. And nothing now was left for the Soviets but the paltry 51 million pouds in the provinces of Voronesh, Tamboff, Pensa, and parts of Tula and Kursk. To

¹ These figures were given by the Commissar of Food at the Congress of Economic Councils at the end of May 1918.

make matters worse, this corn reserve was for the most part in the hands of either the rich peasant speculator or the moderately well-to-do "middle peasant," who would not give it up without very substantial considerations.

The serious straits in which the urban proletariat of North Russia found itself, as a result of the counter-revolutionary offensive of the summer of 1918, led to an internal crisis of the first magnitude in the Soviet Republic. A storm, which had long been threatening, now burst. Certain elements of the villages, generally known as kulaks, had from the first gone with the revolutionary elements of the towns, only because they saw a personal advantage for themselves in the division of the landlords' estates. They dreamed of becoming large proprietors themselves and of growing rich out of the needs of the towns. They clung to the belief of the *petit bourgeois*, that a stocking full of money, even though that money were paper, would bring them through the hard times, and they at once saw a chance of enriching themselves at the expense of the Revolution, when the Soviet Commissars turned their eyes on those 51 million pounds. But part of this corn reserve was also in the hands of the "middle peasantry." This element had remained for the most part loyal to the land commune "mir," had redistributed their allotments every five or six years with the rest of the community, and had never shown very strong leanings towards becoming land proprietors. They supplemented their scanty income from the land by working in little guilds of hand industry, such as basket-making, woodwork and bootmaking. During the war they had shown a certain communist instinct by entering the consumers' co-operative societies, of which they were now the chief support. But they, too, could not resist the temptation of holding up the starving town populations to ransom. As the hunger of the towns increased, the communistic instincts of these peasants weakened, and their individualist instincts grew. When the local representative of the Commissar of Food proposed that they should deliver their small corn surplus through their co-operative societies on credit, after receiving a part payment in manufactured goods from the public stores, they held back. They feared that the Soviets could not live through this crisis, and in that case they would be losers in the bargain, for the counter-revolution would not recognize their contract. They had supported the Revolution because it had removed the great landlords and the Tsarist bureaucracy. Indeed, they had been the most active supporters of the Left S.R.'s, not even shrinking from terrorist acts against the agents of the old regime. But

when it came to reaping the fruits of the social revolution, when it came to constructing a new form of society on a co-operative, instead of upon a competitive, basis, they wavered and held back. But now was no time for wavering. Those who were not with the towns in their fight against the international counter-revolution were against them.

But the towns had allies in the villages. These were the half-proletariat, who supplemented their income from the land by wage-earning for a part of the year in the towns or in the factories scattered about in the rural districts of North Russia. They had acquired the urban workers' psychology without losing touch with the village. Forming for the most part the recruits for the ranks of unskilled labour, they had become a floating population, drifting from one place to another. During their absence from the villages their land was cared for by their womenfolk. They rarely possessed more than one horse, and when they wanted to plough or reap, they had to borrow from the kulaks, to whom they were not infrequently in debt. They thus experienced the hunger of the towns with few of the advantages of the rural population, and the urban proletariat found in them hopeful auxiliaries for revolutionizing the villages and securing some of that 51 million pouds.

Now, the three village classes just described were found in varying proportions in different parts of Russia. Exact figures were very difficult to obtain, but if one takes the census of live-stock per family in various parts of Russia in the years before the Revolution as an indication of economic status, and if one makes allowances for migration and increased impoverishment as the result of the war, one gets figures which may be regarded as a fair indication of the relative strengths of the three classes in the summer of 1918.¹ Thus one might reasonably assume that in the Moscow industrial region and in the forest-clad Upper Volga and Northern Dvina provinces, the poor half-proletarian elements were at this time about 40 per cent. of the whole rural population, and the rich kulak element, with over three horses per family, not more than 10 per cent., while the rest was made up of "middle peasants," engaged in hand industries and co-operative societies. In the southern provinces of Central Russia, where the 51 million pouds lay, and in the Lower Volga provinces, the kulak element (here for the most part rich farmers and ranchers) formed perhaps 30 per cent. of the population, the half-proletarians about 20 per cent., the whole-proletarians,

¹ See *Agrarian Census*, published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Petrograd, 1917.

or *batraki*, 20 per cent. and the "middle peasantry" 30 per cent. Now, the offensive of the international counter-revolution threw the 40 per cent. of poor wage-earning peasantry of the North and Centre, together with the *batraki*, into the camp of the starving urban workers and forced them into a general offensive against the 60 per cent. of the kulaks and "middle peasants." The watchword of the latter was "free trade in corn," and as the Czecho-Slovaks, the Right S.R.'s and Cadets of the "National Centre" promised them this, some of them began to flock to the banner of the Constituent Assembly at Samara. The former held stubbornly to the Soviets, whose watchwords were now more than ever, "State monopoly in all products of prime necessity," and "Those that do not work, neither shall they eat." Round these issues the struggle in the summer of 1918 in the villages raged. The agrarian revolution of the summer and autumn of 1917 had been made by a peasantry united against the landlords for the abolition of the right to hold more land than the owner could cultivate himself. It had ended in complete victory for the peasants. But the agrarian revolution which began a year later, and is not ended at the time of writing, was and is being fought out between two elements within the ranks of the peasantry on the question of the right of a section of the community to withhold the necessities of life from the remainder in times of dearth. The principle involved here is between the rights of unlimited proprietorship in the products of labour on the soil and the rights of the consuming community.

The first signs of the coming struggle on the land were to be observed on June 11th, when the food problem in the towns came up to be discussed in a joint sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, the Moscow Soviet and the Central Committee of the All-Russian Trade Unions. The food conditions in Petrograd and Moscow had been gradually becoming more and more critical. Living in private rooms on the Arbat, I used to receive during May one quarter of a pound of bread a day. I supplemented this with occasional purchases at the free price on the Suchareff market. But the quarter of a pound soon decreased to one-eighth, and after the Czecho-Slovak revolt, vanished altogether. And the Suchareff free market prices were only for those with long purses. Complaints in the working-class quarters of Moscow began to be loud. The Bolshevik regime must get food or go, one used to hear. Symptomatic of the state of feeling in these quarters was the remark which I heard of one of the door-keepers at the Moscow Great Theatre, while waiting for the joint sitting of the Soviets and Trade Unions to begin. "Something

is wrong," he said, "if hunger increases like this. They must get it out of the villages, or we shall go and take it ourselves." This indeed was the problem: how to get at that 51 million pouds in the hands of the kulaks and of the "middle peasantry."

The proceedings commenced with a report of a representative of the Food Commissariat. It was proposed to deal drastically with the situation. The Revolution was in danger if the 51 million pouds of corn could not be obtained for the towns, for then the urban workers would be unable to organize to defeat the White Guard bandits, who had seized the Don and Volga provinces. The Council of the People's Commissars proposed that measures should be taken to "cleanse" the local peasants' Soviets in certain provinces, for many of them had got into the hands of kulaks and "middle peasants," who were refusing to carry out the orders of the Central Soviet and were sabotaging the preparation of food for the towns. It was therefore proposed that in every village and rural district "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry" should be formed. By the constitution of the Republic no person could have either active or passive electoral right on the Soviets, who employed the labour of other citizens. It was necessary to modify and extend this provision of the constitution. The possession of surplus foodstuffs and the participation in illicit trading in products monopolized by the State must now be declared sufficient to disqualify a citizen from active or passive electoral rights. The "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry" were to become the rural Soviets in those districts, where the old Soviets had got into the hands of kulaks and speculators. In those districts where "middle peasants" with undelivered corn stocks were in control of the Soviets, the "Committees" were to supervise the activities of these Soviets in all matters relating to food requisitions; they were to work out the amount of corn which each family could retain and how much it had to deliver, and they were to see that the quantities were delivered. Further, the Central Committee of the Trade Unions was requested to provide lists of workmen who would enter the "Food Army." This army was to go round the rural districts where surplus food lay, and was to requisition by force, if requested to do so by the local "Committees of the Poorer Peasants."

After this Trotsky rose. "He looked exceedingly serious, for grave news had come from the Czecho-Slovak and Don fronts that day. The food had got to be requisitioned for the Red Army at all costs, he said; otherwise all his work in creating a military apparatus to defend the Republic was in vain. "If the requisition mean civil war between the kulaks and the poorer elements of

the villages, then long live this civil war!" he cried. I remember that, as I sat in the gallery and heard these words, I said to myself: "This surely is the death agony of the Russian Revolution." I was terrified at the black abyss which I saw yawning before Russia, and in despair I felt for a moment that capitulation to the international bloodsuckers was perhaps better than to throw oneself into that abyss. But I was astonished at the fearless way in which the Bolsheviks slashed out at their enemies. This seemed at the time to be the one hope—the boundless courage of the men who were leading the Revolution.

Then spoke one of the Left S.R.'s. He roundly attacked the Bolshevik Commissars for proposing a law which modified the constitution of the Republic and meant civil war in the villages. If they wanted to get this 51 million pouds, they must take the peasantry into their confidence. The peasants would never desert their comrades, the urban workers, in the hour of their distress. The Bolsheviks were setting peasant against peasant in the villages, and weakening the front against the real counter-revolution by pretending to see enemies where there were none. The peasantry should be left to build up, freely and undisturbed by bureaucratic Commissars, their communes and co-operative organizations. This alone would solve the food question in the towns. "And what do you propose to do for us *now*?" asked a voice. "We are starving, and the counter-revolution does not wait." But the Left S.R. speaker continued in the same strain. His speech showed plainly that his party were hiding the prejudices of the small owner behind anarchist phrases. For what difference was there between advocating free speculation in corn and denouncing the authority of the Commissars, who were trying to carry out the decrees on the State monopolies? What was the difference between freedom to make profits out of famine and freedom from the galling restrictions of a centralized State power?

But the Left S.R.'s did not carry the day at this session of the Central Soviet and of the Trade Unions. They were overborne by the urban working element, which went in the main with the Bolsheviks. The decree for the formation of "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry" was passed. Soon after this the expeditions began to go out into the villages. Armed parties of factory workers scoured the provinces of Voronesch, Tamboff and Pensa. Communist workmen, who were unemployed on account of the food and raw material shortage in Petrograd and Moscow, went to the villages, where their families were, and got to work in forming little groups of poor peasants and workmen,

These became the new Soviets or "Committees of the Poorer Peasants." The kulaks resisted and got arms together. Some of the "middle peasantry" joined them. They declined to deliver the corn. The "Committees" replied by dissolving the old Soviets and the co-operative societies of the "middle peasants." Some excesses were perpetrated. In Tver, Tula and Ryazan pitched battles were fought and parts of villages wrecked. Spurred on by hunger and by desperation, caused by the oncoming counter-revolution, the urban workmen and the "Committees" regarded the "middle peasants" as traitors, who were stabbing them in the back. In return the "middle peasants," unable to see the terrible straits in which the urban population had been landed by the Germans and the Allies, and imagining that the Revolution had come to an end when they acquired their share of the landlords' estates, regarded the Bolsheviks and the "Committees" as the agents of a neo-Tsarism interfering with the sacred liberty of the individual.

Had this latter view prevailed, the Russian Revolution would indeed have stopped short at the point reached by the French Revolution, when the Jacobins and other Radical individualists, with revolutionary phrases on their lips, sent to the guillotine the embryo-communists of those days for the crime of demanding food requisitions and fixed prices for the necessities of life. But the Jacobins of the summer of 1918 in Russia were up against a stronger opponent than their French forerunners. Lenin and Trotsky had more powerful social strata behind them than had Varlet, Jacques Roux and the leaders of the Paris "sections." The "Committees of the Poorer Peasants" won through. Though a minority, they possessed a central apparatus and controlled the railway system. They were able to reduce piecemeal the backward masses of the distant villages. The corn began to come in. True, I never tasted any of the fruits of the requisitions. I lived during these days almost exclusively on potato skins and dried fish. But those who were organized in trade unions and who were members of factory committees began to receive again their quarter of a pound of bread a day, and with that they had to be satisfied till the Red Army had driven the Czechoslovaks from the Volga.

While the kulaks and all those elements in the villages who were hoping for a new Stolypin period were looking for salvation to the "National Centre" and to the Constituent Assembly in Samara, the "middle peasants," smarting under the thongs of the "Committees" and of the requisitioning detachments, were preparing to strike a blow for *their* interpreta-

tion of liberty. They dared not go to the "National Centre" and to the Constituent Assembly, for instinct told most of them that in that Vendée on the Volga feudal reaction would sooner or later reign supreme. They knew that to save themselves from the Red oppression of the towns and to preserve their right to sell the produce of their labour as they pleased, they must act alone and make one desperate attempt to oust the urban proletariat and their spokesmen, the Bolsheviks, from power, and on the ruins of the Soviet dictatorship proclaim the "free federal communes of the peasants." Conversations which I had with leaders of the Left S.R.'s at this time made it clear to me that they were aiming at something of this sort, although, like all revolutionaries with strong anarchist tendencies, they did not seem to have a very definite programme. It was much easier to find in them a mental atmosphere than a concrete policy. Moreover, it was a remarkable fact that, although the real issue between them and the Bolsheviks was on the question of the rights of the "middle peasantry," the ground on which they chose to fight was that of the foreign policy of the Revolution.

The oppressive nature of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was becoming more keenly felt every day. If the danger from Entente Imperialism was no less great than from that of the Central Powers, it was nevertheless not so easy to attack in a concrete form, whereas in the struggle against Prussian militarism it was always possible to fix upon definite clauses in the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, which forced the Soviet Republic to renounce connection with the Ukraine and which imposed an indemnity upon the Russian workmen and peasants. In the Ukraine the Prussian generals were restoring the regime of the blackest reaction. The poor and "middle peasantry" were being plundered wholesale. Tremendous contributions, many times greater than those of the Red Commissars in Muscovy, were being imposed upon them in kind, while the great landowners and the rich farmer (*kholeboroby*) were left untouched. Peasant risings against the foreign oppressors were breaking out everywhere in the Ukraine. Punitive expeditions were being sent to the villages, and German courts-martial were hanging the peasants wholesale for protecting their homes. But the Brest-Litovsk Treaty bound the revolutionaries in Muscovy to stand idly by, while the Prussian militarists were committing unheard-of atrocities at their very doors. It was confidently expected that the Central Powers, having once finished with the Ukraine, and having left a heap of smoking villages, would turn to North and Central Russia. And in spite of the concentration of forces in France, Hindenburg had more

troops at his disposal for an attack on Moscow than the Allies had at this time. The Imperialism of the Central Powers, therefore, was at this moment the most powerful wing of the international counter-revolution, and unlike the Entente wing, it had the advantage of being able to tie the Revolution's hands with a treaty. In this tragic moment, therefore, it was not surprising that the cry was loud: "Away with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty."

It is sometimes assumed that the anti-German movement, headed by the Left S.R.'s in Russia during June and July 1918, was due to a wave of patriotism passing over the Russian people. For my part, I am convinced that this was not the case, and that the movement was simply part of an attempt to save one class of the peasantry from exploitation at the hands of an agrarian reaction supported by foreign bayonets, and at the same time to use the opportunity, afforded by this struggle, to oust the urban proletariat and the Bolsheviks from control of the Soviets. In other words, it indicated a new phase in the development of the class struggle in the Russian villages; it was another symptom of the second agrarian revolution that began in the summer of 1918 in North and Central Russia. I have more than once called attention above to the close connection between small proprietors' movements and the ideology of anarchist intellectuals, and have shown how the extreme Left often tends to be the handmaid of those to whom the Revolution means liberty to exploit one's neighbour. If one understands this, it is not difficult to see how it came about that the party of the "middle peasantry" was led by those who preached revolutionary war and terrorism against foreign Imperialists abroad and against bureaucratic Commissars at home.

The opportunity soon presented itself. According to the constitution of the Republic a new All-Russian Soviet Congress had to be elected every six months to review the general situation and reappoint the Central Soviet Executive. In the first week of July a new Congress fell due, and for several weeks before a lively agitation had been carried on in towns and villages during the election of the delegates. The Left S.R. press, about the third week of June, began to assume an exceedingly aggressive attitude towards the Bolsheviks, who were accused of selling the Revolution to foreign Imperialists and of oppressing the peasantry under harsh requisition laws. It was alleged that the Bolsheviks had not carried out the provision of the Land Law for the creation of labour communes. But most characteristic of all was the agitation carried on at Left S.R. meetings for the tearing up of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Very active at this time in Moscow

was a young Left S.R. named Sablin. He came from an aristocratic Russian family and had been conspicuous for bravery in leading Red Guard detachments earlier in the Revolution against Korniloff and Kaledin. In a series of lectures he gave out the watchword, "Not war, but rebellion!" In conversations that I had with him I gathered that he wanted to see the Brest-Litovsk Treaty denounced and the peasant rebellions in the Ukraine and elsewhere against the Germans openly supported. An actual declaration of war on the Imperialists he did not advocate, because that would have meant that the Russian workmen and peasants would recognize a central authority in the Revolution for the purpose of carrying on formal war. But, according to him, it was just as essential to break the power of the Commissars and of Trotsky, who was organizing a centralized military force, as it was to break the power of Hindenburg and Ludendorff in the Ukraine.

It would have been a mistake to imagine that these Left S.R. leaders were directing their shafts solely against the Bolshevik Commissars and the German military. This point of view was, of course, sedulously spread about at this time by the agents of the Entente in Russia and elsewhere with the object of proving their favourite fantasy about a "Bolshevik-German conspiracy" and an "alliance between Lenin and the Kaiser." In order to understand the true attitude of the Left S.R.'s I had a talk with one of the leaders of the Central Committee of the party, Karelin, on July 2nd, and found that he was quite explicit on this point. "We are revolutionary Socialists," he said, "and fight against all Imperialists who are trying to intervene in the Revolution. In this we are at one with the Bolsheviks. A denunciation of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty would not mean a recommencement of the war against Germany in union with the Allies. We shall use terror and revolt tactics against the Allies with the same readiness as we shall use them against the Germans." These words I telegraphed to the *Manchester Guardian* on July 3rd, but they never reached their destination, for the Allied censorship was interested in preserving the myth that a big revolt was taking place in Russia against the "Bolshevik-German alliance."

The elections for the Fifth All-Russian Soviet Congress took place in an atmosphere of the greatest excitement. For several days it was uncertain whether the Bolsheviks or the Left S.R.'s would obtain the majority. On July 3rd there was a small majority for the Left S.R.'s. But that evening a large number of Bolshevik delegates arrived from the northern provinces and from Petrograd, and they turned the balance. Then commenced

a contest on the Mandate Commission of the Congress, the Left S.R. members of the Commission accusing the Bolshevik members of having faked a number of mandates. It turned out that the Left S.R.'s had for the most part succeeded in retaining their hold on the Soviets of the southern provinces of Central Russia. In the industrial districts of the Upper Volga and in the northern districts the Soviets were fairly evenly divided between the two parties. But a Congress of the "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry" for the northern provinces had just met in Petrograd. This Congress had decided that, in view of the new decree on June 11th (see above), it was entitled to send delegates to the All-Russian Soviet Congress for all those districts where the local Soviets had not been cleansed of kulak elements and had not delivered the amount of food laid down in the requisitioning lists of "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry." And so the Poor Peasants' Congress in Petrograd, which, to the surprise of all observers, had gathered together over 1,500 delegates, proceeded at once to send their representatives to the All-Russian Soviet Congress in Moscow. The balance was thus redressed in favour of the Bolsheviks, who numbered now 678 delegates, while the Left S.R.'s remained at 369. The latter made a lively protest at this "trick" of shoving the Poorer Peasants' Committees into the Congress. But the Bolsheviks replied by reference to a decree of the Central Soviet Executive for May 14th. It is true that this decree did not expressly provide that the "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry" should send delegates to the All-Russian Soviet Congresses, but it did lay down* that "in any district the labouring peasants, not employing other citizens' labour, must see that all peasants who have surplus grain stores and refuse to deliver them up at the fixed prices be declared enemies of the people, and be deprived of their rights as citizens of the Republic and be brought before a revolutionary tribunal." The decree of June 11th, creating "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry," followed the decree of May 14th, and in effect made these Committees the organs for disenfranchising holders of grain who refused to deliver. The Bolsheviks used the spirit, if not the exact letter, of the law in accepting the delegates of the Petrograd Poor Peasants' Congress at the All-Russian Soviet Congress in Moscow. Nevertheless, they laid themselves open to the charge of "faking" mandates. To this, however, they replied with the watchword: "*Salus Revolutionis suprema lex.*"

On July 4th the Fifth All-Russian Soviet Congress opened.

* Section 2 of the text, as printed in the official Soviet *Izvestia* for May 14, 1920.

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The excitement was intense, and the question, "What will be done to repel the counter-revolution?" was heard on every side. As I entered the Great Theatre, I thought of the brilliant gathering that I had attended under that same roof nearly a year ago, when Kerensky had summoned the State Congress to save his tottering Coalition. I remembered the embittered attacks of General Kaledin and the Cadets upon the mild Menshevik Soviets, the taunts of the Cavaliers of St. George against Tscheidze and the Cossack worker, Esaul Nagaeff. Where were all these figures now? The great flood of the Revolution had swept on and left them stranded like driftwood on the shore. A solitary Bolshevik, Ryazanoff, had then spoken for the "extreme Left wing," which did not dare to show its face. Now the party which he had represented was alone at the helm of the Revolution, and he had been discarded as "too moderate." "The Revolution devours its children"—these words again echoed in my ears, as I looked on this new scene of the great drama.

The Great Theatre was brilliantly lighted. The stalls and balconies were packed with delegates. In the gallery sat visitors, and one of the boxes was occupied by the German Ambassador, Mirbach, with a suite of diplomats. The unofficial diplomatic representatives of America and England were also present. On the stage the Presidium gathered. All the leading personalities of the Revolution were there. Lenin's bald head was easily distinguished; Trotsky's fiery eyes shone out beneath his dark bushy hair. Robust and jovial Kamkoff, who led the Left S.R.'s, was engaged in a *tête-à-tête* with the lean, intellectual figure of Karelin. And darting in and out of the throng of revolutionary celebrities was a little woman in a black dress and grey apron. This was Spiridonova. Her pale face and embittered glance seemed to show that she was nursing a grievance against Lenin and against all those who "were betraying the Revolution to the foreign Imperialists."

Before President Sverdloff had taken his seat, the assembled delegates were startled by seeing Kamkoff spring forward on the stage and demand in the name of the Left S.R.'s that the delegates of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, suppressed by the German militarists, be admitted at once to the Congress with the right to vote. This was the first symptom of the coming storm. How could the Bolshevik Commissars permit the German Ambassador to be present at the Congress, or even to reside in Moscow, if they admitted the subterranean Ukrainian Soviets to their deliberations and thereby, in fact, tore up the Brest-Litovsk Treaty? Here was a dilemma for the Bolsheviks at the outset. Sverdloff

rose and proposed in the name of the Presidium that "a spokesman from the Ukrainian delegation should be heard." A young man in a Ukrainian peasant shirt, embroidered with red and blue borders, rose. "We represent," he said in a voice that breathed defiance, "the Ukrainian workmen's and peasants' Soviets, which, though suppressed under the iron heel of Hindenburg, are more alive to-day than ever." "Long live the Ukrainian Social Revolution! Down with the Brest-Litovsk Peace!" roared the delegates of the Left S.R.'s, as they rose to their feet and cheered this utterance. Proceeding to relate how the efforts of the German military authorities to squeeze 60 million pouds of corn out of the Ukraine had resulted in failure, the Ukrainian delegate told in glowing terms how the peasants were rising against their oppressors. German military trains were being blown up, their powder magazines were exploded, and their detachments cut off in the forests and massacred. "Come to our aid," he implored, holding out both hands to the Congress, "for we shall drive the German generals all the quicker out of Kieff, if you drive the German Ambassador out of Moscow." "Drive him out, you cowards!" roared the delegates of the Left S.R.'s, while Count Mirbach sat pale and motionless in the Ambassadors' box.

Amid tense silence, President Sverdloff, that incarnation of an American political convention boss in Russian surroundings, rose. "The demand of a certain section of this Congress," he said, "that the Ukrainian Soviets should be represented here is a political question, which can only be decided by direct vote of this Congress. I therefore propose that the question be put to the vote." During the minutes that followed it was clear that the Bolsheviks were not all of one mind. The Communist Left, which had made itself felt during the Brest-Litovsk crisis in February, was inclined to join with the Left S.R.'s in renouncing "opportunism." But again the realist wing, with Lenin at its head, appealed to reason to check sentiment. A compromise was reached. The Ukrainian delegates were refused the right to vote in the Congress by 544 votes against 400, but they were unanimously admitted with the right to speak on the order of the day.

But the Left S.R.'s did not intend to give up the fight. For them it had only begun. The occasion was found during the morning, when Trotsky asked leave to make a statement on a subject outside the standing orders. As Commissar for War, he said, it was his duty to call the attention of the Congress to the serious state of affairs on the southern frontiers of the Republic. The Brest-Litovsk Treaty still remained in force, and the German

troops in the Ukraine had not broken the demarcation line, as laid down in the Treaty. It was true that the Germans had broken the Treaty by occupying the Don and by supporting Krasnoff's White troops, who were fighting against the Reds to the south of Voronesch. If this was regarded as an act of war, the Congress should consider whether the time had not come to denounce the Treaty and declare a separate war on the Central Powers. This would depend upon what the Congress thought of the chances of winning such a war in the present state of the Republic's armed forces. But in the meantime a number of irresponsible people on the southern frontier were agitating among the newly enlisted recruits of the Red Army for an immediate advance, without a declaration of war, against the German troops, who were remaining quite passive in this sector. He wanted, therefore, to know the decision of the Congress on this matter. If there was to be war, then he must draw up plans and dispose his forces accordingly; if it was still to be nominal peace, then he would continue his plans for creating the Red Army and find other means of combating the attacks of the German hirlings on the Don. It was for the Congress to decide whether these anarchist agitators and impressionable youths were to be allowed to go about undermining the discipline of the Red Army. They were for the most part people who were engaged in leading terrorist parties in the Ukraine, and who were very brave when it came to cutting off small parties of Germans and annihilating them by overwhelming force. But they would be the first to disappear at the sight of a company of German helmets. The Bolshevik delegates loudly applauded this speech. The Left S.R.'s, however, howled with derision. "You think yourself the new Napoleon," they yelled.

Then up jumped their leader, Kamkoff. "What is going on on the southern frontier," he cried, "is not the work of provocative agitators. It is the work of the Russian revolutionary peasants and workers, who see their comrades in the Ukraine being murdered just over the way, while you Commissars sit still and profess that you are bound by treaties. This is the true sign of the revolutionary anger of the Russian workers and peasants." He paused and walked across the stage till he got to the spot just opposite the box where Count Mirbach and his German diplomats sat. He pointed his finger straight at Mirbach and, looking round at the vast throng of assembled delegates, cried: "Do you suppose that our peasant soldiers on the southern frontier will stand idly by and see their brothers murdered under their eyes by the agents of this barbarian?" At these

words the Left S.R. delegates rose to their feet, yelled and shook their fists at the German Ambassador and cried "Down with the tyrant!" "Drive him out of Moscow!" The tumult which followed beggars description. For ten minutes it was impossible to hear a word of coherent speech. The Bolshevik delegates and the Commissars on the stage sat silent, chuckling under their breath at the blows being delivered at the originators of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Etiquette alone seemed to keep them from joining in the demonstration. At last Sverdloff's voice could be heard proclaiming quite mechanically, "I call you, Comrade Kamkoff, to order for using improper expressions towards a guest of the Congress." He said this as if he was taking nasty medicine.

But this did not pacify the Left S.R.'s, for when the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Zinovieff, rose to reply to Kamkoff, he was greeted with cries of: "You are ordered to speak by Mirbach!" "How much has he paid you?" Not listening to these taunts, Zinovieff explained how the workmen of Petrograd had to suffer as much as the peasants behind the Ukrainian frontier, because they saw the crimes which the German militarists were committing in the Baltic provinces. Hardly a day passed without news of the hanging of revolutionary workmen, whose only offence had been that they had taken part in the work of the Soviets after the November Revolution. But the Petrograd workmen had sufficient revolutionary discipline to know when and how to strike, and did not allow themselves to be carried away by their feelings or to be influenced by childish people, who were in reality playing the game of the counter-revolution. Trotsky then proposed a resolution, which left the question of war and peace, according to the article of the Soviet Constitution, in the hands of the Congress, or of the Central Soviet Executive, and called upon the soldiers of the Red Army to obey only their commanders and not to listen to irresponsible agitators. When the resolution was read out, every Left S.R. delegate got up and left the theatre. The Bolsheviks alone remained, and the resolution was carried unanimously. But what were the Left S.R.'s going to do? Did this mean that they were preparing to break up the Congress by a *coup*?

As I have explained above, the Left S.R.'s had selected the ground of foreign policy on which to fight an internal, social issue. This was made plain by the Congress proceedings on the morning of the following day. By nine o'clock the Left S.R. delegates had returned to the attack. Sverdloff rose to present his report to the Congress on the activities of the old Executive now laying

down office. A great deal of constructive work, he said, had been begun since the Great Convention had dispersed. The Central Soviet Executive, as the supreme legislative authority in the Republic, had created the skeleton of an executive apparatus which was to be directly under its control. They had not lost sight of the fact that, during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the legislative and executive functions must be combined in the same body. Modifications of the constitution had been made for the rural districts by the creation of the "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry." This had been necessary in order to fight against food speculation in the more backward provinces. Under the Commissariat of Justice revolutionary tribunals had been set up, and it had been found necessary to reintroduce the death penalty for political crimes against the safety of the Republic. At this remark there were loud cries of "Down with the death sentence!" from the Left S.R.'s, followed by counter-cries of "Long live revolutionary discipline!" from the Bolshevik delegates.

As soon as he had finished, Marie Spiridonova rose to reply on behalf of the Left S.R.'s. The report, she said, which they had just heard from the President of the Central Soviet Executive was of the greatest significance, because it showed to what extent their party was justified in accusing the Bolsheviks of having prostituted the Revolution. In the days of the Great Convention of January the spirit of the revolutionary workmen and peasants was victorious. The "Declaration of the Rights of the Toiling and Exploited Masses" had been passed and was a guarantee against infringements of the liberties of the proletariat. The Land Law had been passed in March, and, under the pressure of their party, the principle of the "socialization" of land had been made the chief feature of that law. Their party had also secured the appointment of a Permanent Committee for Peasant Affairs, to advise the Central Soviet Executive in all matters concerning the land. This Committee had co-opted members from the provincial peasant Soviets. Their party had secured the ear of this Committee and through it were popularizing the idea of "free labour communes" on the land, were pushing co-operation among the "middle peasantry," and educating the population of the backward rural districts. But in the meantime the Commissars and the Bolshevik members of the Central Soviet Executive had done everything to undermine the usefulness of this Standing Peasant Committee. They had built up a great bureaucracy in the Council of Public Economy and were trying to bring all the administrative work connected with the Land Law

and with the decrees relating to the life of the peasant under the control of these soulless bureaux. They had forced the communes and *artels* of the labouring peasantry to enter the great trade union machine on the ground that the labouring peasants, being proletarians, must be treated in the same way as the town workers. They had covered the provinces with their "Committees of the Poorer Peasantry," into which only a small fraction of the village population entered, and that always the most useless part which had been in most cases cut off from village life for years. These they had put under their Commissars and bureaucrats, and set them up as the organs of the "working peasantry." While her party, through their standing Committee, were working to oust the kulaks and rich speculators by uniting the poorest peasants with the "middle peasantry," the Bolsheviks had singled out only 10 per cent. of the whole village and had set them against the rest, thereby throwing the "middle peasantry" into the arms of the kulaks. While the Left S.R.'s had in several of the Central provinces set to work to create labour communes of families farming and living together, and had made considerable progress in this direction, the Bolshevik Commissars had refused to give them any assistance, unless these communes were subjected to their control and carried out certain rules relating to the delivery of food at fixed prices. "When I went the other day to the President of the Council of People's Commissars," she said, turning towards Lenin, "and asked him for assistance for our communes, he replied cynically, 'If you get this assistance, how long will it keep your mouth shut?' I tell you, comrades Bolsheviks, this is not the way to win the peasantry. You may have the majority at this Congress, but you have not the majority in the country. You are turning the landlords' demesnes into great State farms controlled by your Commissars, and then you say you have created Socialism, but the working peasant of Russia sees in this only a return to the slavery from which he thought he had just freed himself. You reintroduce the death sentence and make law a State institution, instead of trusting to the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses to punish traitors in times of crisis. And above all, you continue to coquette with foreign Imperialists. The German murderer, Mirbach, is allowed by you to reside in our revolutionary capital. You talk of buying off the hostility of the Allied Imperialists by throwing them timber and railway concessions. You have betrayed the Revolution, and upon your heads lies the responsibility for what will result."

As this Valkyrie of the Russian Revolution resumed her seat,

she received a tremendous ovation from the Left S.R. delegates. And as I listened I could not but feel that her words were the swan song of those who embodied the revolutionary enthusiasm of Russia. She and her followers seemed to want Russia to live in a permanent state of revolution. The days of November 1917 were not for her a passing phase, but a normal condition of society. After Spiridonova's speech, Zinovieff rose to reply on behalf of the Bolsheviks. He said nothing new, but he justified the new administrative measures of the Soviet Executive, and when he referred to the Red Army, the Bolshevik delegates rose to their feet with cries of, "Long live the army of the revolutionary workers!" During his speech, the leaders of the Left S.R.'s left the hall and mysteriously disappeared. Sverdloff then adjourned the sitting till the afternoon.

On leaving my lodging near the end of the Arbat about two o'clock to return to the afternoon sitting of the Congress, I heard two loud explosions, followed by what seemed to me to be revolver shots. The pressure of the air on my cheek during the explosion showed that dynamite or some high explosive had gone off. It seemed that some munition store on the outskirts of Moscow had been blown up. I reached the Great Theatre, sat down in the reporters' tribune and waited. Russian journalists and revolutionary friends of mine came along, and we discussed the situation. Conspicuous by their absence, however, were the Left S.R.'s, among whom I had a number of good friends. Two hours went by, and we began to get impatient. In the third hour Spiridonova appeared, looking as white as a sheet, and seated herself alone on the platform. "She has come to make an important statement, I hear," said one of my neighbours; "I wonder what it can be." Some Bolshevik Commissars and members of the Central Soviet, who were also on the platform, suddenly became very serious and then disappeared. Half an hour later a rumour began to go round the theatre: Mirbach had been assassinated! Soon after, another went round to the effect that there was an attempt on his life, but that he had only been wounded. My mind flashed back at once to the two explosions I had heard. And then I remembered that my lodgings were not more than 100 yards from the German Embassy. So that was the cause of the delay, I thought; and I began to ponder on what might happen if Mirbach was indeed assassinated. What a pity I had not packed my trunk, ready to bolt to the East before the oncoming Germans! I thought.

About eight o'clock the Bolshevik commandant of the theatre entered and announced that the German Ambassador had been

assassinated by two Left S.R.'s at two o'clock that afternoon ; that the Central Committee of the Left S.R.'s had proclaimed the authority of the Bolshevik Commissars to be annulled, that armed Anarchist detachments had seized the post office and telegraphs and were sending out telegrams to all provincial Soviets in the name of a provisional revolutionary government. The commandant, however, added grimly that this adventure would be liquidated in a few hours, because the garrison of the city was loyal to the party which had the majority of the Congress behind it. Meanwhile every person in the theatre must consider himself detained until further notice by the military commandant of the city. There was nothing to be done but to make the best of it and wait. Till midnight we remained shut up in the theatre, speculating on all the possibilities of the *coup* of the Left S.R.'s. Then the commandant appeared again and permitted all journalists and Bolshevik delegates of the Congress, after an examination of documents, to leave. Returning home that night, I heard the crackle of rifle-fire away to the north in the suburbs of the city.

Next day, Sunday, July 7th, I was early on the street. Only the *Izvestia* was published, and that was but a single sheet. In a long proclamation the Council of the People's Commissars appealed to the masses to keep quiet and trust the Congress. The Left S.R.'s were denounced as political children, who had got to be put under restraint once and for all, otherwise revolutionary Russia would be plunged into official war with Germany before she was ready to fight. About eleven o'clock the houses of Moscow began to shake with the thunder of field artillery, which seemed to come from a direction just to the north of the Kremlin. I tried to cross the Tverskaya, but found the way barred by infantry and artillery, which were loyal to the Commissars. After a long detour, I reached the post and telegraph office, which I found had been recaptured by Bolshevik troops. The *coup* of the Left S.R.'s had already been practically liquidated. In a big barracks in the northern suburbs the Anarchist detachments had been rounded up. The artillery shots of the morning had knocked the stuffing out of these people, who were for the most part well-meaning but crazy intellectuals. I returned through the centre of the city and visited the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, but could only find Madame Radek. She, however, told me that the revolt had been completely suppressed in Moscow, but that it was not known what effect some of the telegrams, which the insurgents had succeeded in sending out to the provinces, might have had there.

The *Izvestia* announced next day that several leading Left

S.R.'s, among them Marie Spiridonova, had been arrested and would be brought before a special revolutionary tribunal and charged with fomenting armed rebellion. One of the assassins of Count Mirbach, an Anarchist in the service of the Left S.R.'s, had been already brought before this tribunal, sentenced for murder and shot.¹ Further, it was stated that the Commissar for Foreign Affairs had officially expressed regret for the murder of the German Ambassador to his *Chargé d'Affaires*, who had accepted the regret and was waiting instructions from Berlin. During the course of the day telegrams were received from all over the country, showing that local risings of Left S.R.'s and Anarchists had taken place and had been put down, and their leaders arrested. On the southern frontier several Left S.R.'s, who had been engaged in agitation among troops of the Red Army, had been shot. The Bolshevik Party with its Commissars and newly-fledged bureaucracy had triumphed. The rebellion of the extreme Anarchist Left, in alliance with the "middle peasantry" had been suppressed. The internal front at any rate was safe. Lenin, in an interview with a correspondent of the *Izvestia*, thus characterized the situation created on this day by the Left S.R. *coup*: "The Revolution with extraordinary consistency brings to its logical end every one of its stages, mercilessly exposing the stupidity and criminality of those people who use tactics unsuitable for the given situation. The Left S.R.'s have committed political suicide by striking against revolutionary *Realpolitik*, just as the Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s committed suicide last summer, by clinging to their coalition with the middle classes long after the necessity for a coalition phase had disappeared. Henceforth we, Bolsheviks, the spokesmen of the advanced guard of the proletariat, must bear the sole burden of the Revolution."

Indeed, one felt that with the events of July 4th to 8th an entirely new phase in the internal development of the Revolution had commenced, comparable in significance to the phase which opened with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. It was already noticeable in the Great Theatre, when on the afternoon of the 8th a rump Soviet Congress assembled to continue the work which a full Congress had commenced four days before. All the leaders of the Left S.R.'s were either arrested or else had fled. A few followers, not understanding the tragedy that had overcome their party, remained like sheep without a shepherd, wandering about the corridors of the theatre. Among the

* It was never established who this person was, and doubts were subsequently expressed as to whether he was shot at all. It is not improbable that this announcement in the *Izvestia* was camouflage for the benefit of Berlin.

Bolshevik delegates there was a new feeling. "Now is the time for action and not for talk," one seemed to see written on all their faces. "Now is the time to receive orders from above and see they are carried out below. Away with speeches and discussions!" Such was the new spirit that pervaded the Russian Revolution from that day forth. If the backwoods villages will not work for the Revolution, they must be forced. The industrial workers must lead and, if necessary, drive the Revolution.

The whole proceeding on that and subsequent days showed an entire lack of that revolutionary enthusiasm which had been such a feature of other Congresses and of that Congress on its first days. No one stood up and cheered or shouted: "Long Live the Red Army! Long live the Social Revolution in the Ukraine! Long Live the World Revolution!" The delegates that were left knew that by shouting these words they would not bring the thoughts which they conveyed any nearer to fulfilment. Instead, the Presidium of the Congress, composed now solely of Bolsheviks, read reports which were mechanically accepted without discussion. Stekloff read and explained the amended Constitution, worked out by the Special Commission appointed by the Great Convention. The Commissar of Produce read a report on the food situation. Both reports had only to be read in order to be passed. I confess to having had a feeling of regret for the enthusiasm and picturesqueness of the revolutionary scenes, now apparently a thing of the past. Was this the beginning of a Napoleonic era, with Bolshevik Commissars riding on the necks of a sheepish proletariat? This thought was clearly passing through the mind of many observers at this time. As I walked home that night with an American Anarchist friend, the latter sadly remarked: "The Russian Revolution has come to an end this day. The counter-revolution is already here." For him the 9th of Thermidor had come. He saw in the revolt of the Left S.R.'s and the murder of Mirbach a parallel to the last attempts of the Jacobins to rule the Convention, ending in the Consulate and in the coming of Napoleon. But he forgot that the Jacobins were not the Bolsheviks. The events of July 4th to 8th, 1918, in Moscow might be far more justly compared with the struggle between the Jacobins and the Parisian Communists. But the industrial proletariat of France was too feeble to win through. A hundred and twenty years had passed, and during that time even Russia had produced a powerful and conscious industrial proletariat. The Left S.R.'s, with all their revolutionary phraseology, were no more than middle-class

Jacobins of the 20th century, who had challenged the industrial proletariat of Muscovy, largely steeped in Communist ideas. On this occasion the issue of the fight had been the reverse of the issue in Paris in 1794. It was now demonstrated for the first time in history that the driving forces making for social change are the small, revolutionary well-disciplined and clear-thinking minorities in industrial centres—minorities capable of dragging behind them passive majorities and of defeating those who abandon political realism for pseudo-revolutionary phrases. That also was the lesson of the Second Agrarian Revolution of the summer of 1918.

CHAPTER XXI

REVOLUTIONARY WAR—RED TERROR BEGINS

THE outlook for that handful of courageous and determined Communists, who had been left by the events of the first week of July with the sole responsibility for the further development of the Revolution, was now desperate in the extreme. Up till this time the Left S.R.'s, although they had withdrawn their members from the Council of the People's Commissars since the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, had nevertheless co-operated with the Bolsheviks in the Soviets and had observed an attitude of detached criticism towards their economic policy. That was all past now. The full weight of the onslaught of the international counter-revolution fell on the rump Bolshevik Soviets. The situation seemed so hopeless that I remember speculating with my friends how long the Communists could remain in power. I was comparatively optimistic, but I did not give them more than a month to live.

Of the two wings of the international counter-revolution the Allied wing had now become the most successful. On July 11th we heard news in Moscow of a serious rebellion against the Soviets in Yaroslav. General Alexieff's Volunteer Corps, which had now become the military organization of the "National Centre" in Samara and the North Caucasus, had its secret agents in that important centre of rail and water communication on the Upper Volga. These agents had seized the local arsenal, armed the students, the sons of the kulaks, and even the priests in the monastery, and had deposed the Soviets, executed all Communists, and were preparing the way for a complete restoration. The plan was well laid, but the revolt was premature, for it aimed at linking up the Czecho-Slovak forces on the Lower Volga with the Franco-British forces that had landed in Murmansk. But the former had not yet advanced up to Kazan, nor the latter to Archangel, and therefore a large strip of territory remained between the Yaroslav White Guards and their collaborators to

the south-east and north. Nevertheless, so firmly did they establish themselves in Yaroslav, that it was not till July 24th that the Soviet in Moscow was able to muster Red troops of sufficient strength to recapture the town. Terrific fighting took place in the meantime, and much valuable property and many works of art were destroyed in the course of the military operations.

On July 29th the Allied offensive against the Soviet Republic began in earnest. After having proclaimed that they had only come to the Murman to protect the North Russian coast from White Finns and from German submarines, the Allied military and naval forces commenced to advance into regions where no White Finn or German submarine had ever been seen or heard of. Instead of marching towards the Finnish frontier and the German naval bases on the Baltic, they marched south-east, where they could join up with the Czecho-Slovaks and with General Alexeieff's White Guards on the Upper Volga. This, of course, was the true object for which they had come to Russia. Their enemy was the Soviet Republic, which had repudiated loans, and only in a secondary degree German militarism. On August 2nd Allied naval and military forces bombarded the forts outside Archangel and shortly after entered the city. On August 5th the Allied commands issued an appeal to the "Russian people," calling upon them to give them their support in their effort to re-establish "ordered government" in Russia. The Allies had come as "friends of the Russian people" and were not, of course, "interfering in their internal affairs," in spite of the fact that their first act in Archangel was to execute all leaders of the Soviets whom they could lay their hands on. On the following day news arrived that the Czecho-Slovaks had advanced up the Volga, surprised the small Red force in Kazan, which, being surrounded on three sides, had retired from the city towards the north. At the same time the Allies pushed down the railway between Archangel and Vologda, thus leaving only the strip of country which included the latter city, Yaroslav, Viatka and Nijni Novgorod between them and the Czecho-Slovaks. Only disorganized and demoralized Red Guard bands lay within this strip, and there was nothing to prevent the two Allied forces from joining. The condition of the Russian provinces at this time was like the condition of butter. Anyone who chose could cut out a piece and take it. It only required a handful of energetic people with an organization and a few machine-guns, and they could have gone from Moscow to Vladivostock. Of course, there was a handful of energetic people also in Moscow, who

were preparing an organization with machine-guns, and they would in a short time be capable of galvanizing the viscous mass of the Russian provinces. But they required a few more weeks to get going, and in the meantime the Allies had the field to themselves. It was a race for time, and the Allies did not seem to know it, when they set out on their adventure.

Meanwhile under the bayonets of the Czecho-Slovaks was being set up in the occupied districts of Kazan the full authority of the Committee of the Constituent Assembly, backed by the landlords and the Cadets of the "National Centre." The well-known Right S.R. and former terrorist fighter against Tsarism, Savinkoff, arrived in Kazan and, supported by the kulak element of the villages, abolished the Soviets and prepared the way for a complete restoration. The "middle peasantry" of the south-eastern districts began to tremble for the conquests of the Revolution, when they saw the landlords restored to their old properties. They wondered whether it was, perhaps, not better after all under the rule of requisitioning Commissars. As for the poorer peasants and the landless *batraki*, who had immigrated from the north, they fled back into the small area of country which was still left to the Soviets, or else fell victims to the White Terror. The revolutionary movement in the Lower Volga provinces retired for the time completely underground. Savinkoff and the Committee of the Constituent Assembly ordered a general mobilization for a "National Army" to join hands with the Allies in the north and march with them on Moscow to clear out the "Bolshevik traitors." But this mobilization of a "National Army" was the rock on which the Constituent Assembly subsequently broke up, for this army was composed not only of kulak, but also of "middle peasant" and of *batraki* elements. It thus lost its class character, and the chance of Communist risings in its rear increased.

During this time the German wing of the international counter-revolution was not idle. True, it could not do so much as the Allied wing, for it was already clear to the Kaiser's Government that the Ludendorff offensive in France was not progressing, and every man and every shell had to be spared to prevent a collapse in the West. Nevertheless, the impending fall of the Soviet Republic supplied the incentive to the German warlords to be in at the death, if possible. On July 26th the German *Chargé d'Affaires* in Moscow presented a Note to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, demanding, in the name of the Central Powers, that their Embassies should in future be protected by a battalion of German soldiers, who should be stationed perma-

nently in Moscow. The sensation created by this demand was tremendous. I remember being present at the special sitting of the Central Soviet Executive in the Hôtel Metropole that night. Lenin read the Note amid tense silence. When he had finished, he cocked his little bald head on one side and said: "It is for you to decide whether the Soviet Republic is to be made, under cover of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, a colony of Berlin." These words, coming from the man who had done more than any other to get the Brest-Litovsk Treaty signed, were very significant—all the more so when he added: "It is time for us to get up on our legs and show that we can resist the claims of these international bandits." The demands in the Note were categorically refused, and the Commissar for Foreign Affairs was empowered to negotiate with the German *Chargé d'Affaires* for measures of protection for the Embassies of the Central Powers. Two days later Tchitcherin proposed to Herr Ritzler that a detachment of armed German colonists from the Volga provinces should guard the Central Powers' Embassies. After some delay this was agreed to. But apparently Herr Ritzler and Herr Helferich, who had just arrived from Berlin to take up his duties as the new German Ambassador, discovered that these German colonists were not a sufficient guarantee against further Anarchist bomb attempts. The colonists turned out to be German Communists, who had formed a special Red militia for their districts on the Lower Volga. Herr Helferich, after a few days' stay in Moscow, informed Tchitcherin that, since the Soviet Republic could not take measures to protect his life, he and his staff would be compelled to leave the territories of the Republic and go to Pskoff in the German occupied territory. And so ended this *démarche* from Berlin—a sufficient proof that Prussian militarism was on its last legs. From this day there was no direct German representation in Moscow, the Consul and the War Prisoners' Commission acting in place of an Ambassador.

But if the German General Staff in the East had to give up its plan for coming in at the death at Moscow on account of the critical state of the German armies in France, it was nevertheless able to push on with its assistance to General Krasnoff on the Don. As the chances of victory in the West diminished, the possibility of acting as partner with the Allies in the task of liquidating the Russian Revolution unfolded itself before the eyes of Ludendorff. In the third week of August General Krasnoff with German supplies and officers invaded the southern part of the Voronesch province, one of the few Central provinces

where some of the 51 million pounds of corn still remained. At the same time Allied agents blew up three food trains in the station at Voronesh (reported in the *Izvestia* for August 25th). Revolts of the "middle peasantry," led by outlawed Left S.R.'s, broke out in Orel, Tver and Tamboff. Food stores destined for the new Red Army were destroyed in the fighting which ensued, and several provincial Commissars, certain of the fall of the Communist Soviets, made haste to get off into safe places with as much public money as they could lay their hands on. Indeed, the worst danger that began to appear about this time was the enemy in the rear, the traitor that sat in the bureaux of the Soviets—the "fair weather Communist." And to add to the horrors of these days, it must be remembered that the Soviet territories were completely cut off from the outer world. No telegrams could be sent to any Allied country, no radio message from Moscow was taken up by any wireless station. No newspaper could be obtained from Western Europe, and—worst of all—there was no means of explaining to the outer world what was going on in Russia, how grievously the Soviet Republic was being libelled by the hirelings of the Allied press agencies, how treacherously she was being attacked, blockaded and starved by mealy-mouthed hypocrites with unctuous phrases on their lips about "non-interference in the internal affairs of Russia." "The Allies are sowing dragons' teeth in Eastern Europe," I telegraphed to the *Manchester Guardian* by wireless on July 3rd. "Some day they will grow into bayonets, which will be turned into directions they least desire." But that message was not taken up, or, if it was, the Allied censorship took care that it did not reach its destination.

In the last week of August the *Izvestia* published the Lockhart disclosures. The Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution had obtained evidence of a plot against the Republic, in which the British agent Lockhart was involved.¹ According to this evidence, Lockhart had invited to his rooms an officer of the Lettish regiment of the Moscow garrison and paid him a large sum of money to depose the Soviet authority in Moscow and arrest the Council of the People's Commissars. In return for this, Lockhart had hinted, without definitely pledging himself, that the Allies would recognize the independence of the Baltic States. A few days later came the publication of René Marchant's letter to President Poincaré, which has

¹ This evidence was subsequently corroborated by the witnesses before the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal on November 28, 1918, at the trial of Lockhart's accomplices, at which the writer was present.

since been issued as a pamphlet.¹ In this the former correspondent of the *Figaro* describes being present in the first week of August at a meeting at the American Consulate, in which French and British diplomatic representatives also took part, and in which certain agents of the Consulates of these countries in Moscow discussed plans for blowing up the railway bridges over the Volkova River—an act which would have condemned the whole of the population of Petrograd to death from starvation.

The indignation which these criminal plots aroused in the minds of all honest men caused a number of Allied citizens in Moscow, including myself, to decide to stand by the Russian Soviets, come what might, and to use every effort that lay within our power to tell the workmen and soldiers of the Allied countries what their rulers were expecting them to do, and were doing, in Russia. For my part, I sat down during the second week of August and wrote off, as fast as my pen would permit me, a pamphlet entitled, "The Truth about the Allied Intervention in Russia," and signed my name to it, so that every Englishman should know that there was at least one of his countrymen who would not be silent. The pamphlet was printed in 50,000 copies and translated into three languages. Similar work was done by a member of the French Military Mission, and quickly a little group of Allied citizens was formed in Moscow who mutually pledged themselves to continue work of this kind until the Allied intervention was stopped. I even went down to the headquarters of the International Legion of the Red Army in the Zamoskvareka and offered myself for enlistment. But there were no arms or equipment ready, for all the energies of the War Commissariat were directed towards training the picked workmen's battalions from the Petrograd and Moscow factories. In the meantime I was offered, and accepted, a job as translator in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, where I set to work at turning the Soviet Constitution and the Land Law into English. In this I hoped to help a little in breaking down the cordon of lies and calumny which barred the Russian Soviets from the outer world.

It was still possible, even in the heat of these days, to snatch a few moments for a calm review of the situation, and to realize that the Allied intervention was an inevitable, indeed a natural, episode in the political developments that arose in the wake of the European war. For the social revolution, which had taken place in Russia, had so shaken the bases of international finance-capital, that the Imperialist belligerents of both camps were

¹ People's Russian Information Bureau, London.

of necessity compelled to stamp out the Soviet Republic by force, if they possibly could. I learned the international character of the forces attacking the Soviet Republic by maintaining contact with certain Moscow middle-class and aristocratic circles. I was living at this time in the house of Count Sergei Tolstoy, the eldest son of Leo Tolstoy, in Levshinsky Street. As the threats of repressive measures against the bourgeoisie increased, Count Sergei's house became a quiet meeting-place for forlorn aristocrats and Cadet politicians, who did not yet think of giving up the struggle. The Count and Countess maintained a very fair impartiality and could hardly be suspected of allowing their house to become the haunt of White conspirators. Of course, it was impossible for them, with their upbringing and earlier surroundings, to sympathize with or to understand all that the Soviets and the Communists were doing. The Count had developed some of his father's Christian Anarchist tendencies, condemned the old regime in Russia and hankered after Henry George and the single tax. But ever and anon he remembered that he had once been a proud landlord, with whole villages that he could claim as his own, and his spirit rebelled against the "Red tyrants," who were destroying his "liberty." It was the same with the Countess. I felt as if both of them, throughout these terrific days, were longing to find some remote corner of the Russian backwoods, where they could end their days in peace. How could they understand the working of the forces that had been let loose in this gigantic social eruption? It was hard enough for younger generations, who had not the prejudices of a past social order to outlive.

At their house, however, there gathered during August and September quite a number of interesting people. They came mostly after dark with their cloaks over their faces; often they were disguised, and they slept sometimes on the sofa in the drawing-room and then disappeared before the sun rose. They were generally expecting midnight searches in their own dwellings by the officials of the Extraordinary Commission. I remember Prince Trubetsky, the ecclesiastical historian and Cadet politician. Prince Volkonsky also occasionally turned up, and so did various relations of the Countess, who were connected with General Skoropadsky, the pro-German Ataman of the Ukraine. The youngest daughter of Leo Tolstoy, the Count's sister, also came in sometimes. She had been active in the Red Cross during the war, and was inclined to be pro-Ally. Listening to their conversation, one could get a fairly good impression of the mental attitude of the Russian aristocracy and middle classes

of these times. Some would be pro-Ally and some pro-German. But it was quite an unimportant matter to them which side won the war in Western Europe. For them there was only one question: how to reconcile England with Germany and secure the support of both for the overthrow of the Soviets. The pro-Germans thought the Central Powers would, even if defeated, be able to reach Moscow and relieve them. They prayed that the Allies, if victorious, would give the Germans a free hand to settle with the Commissars once and for all. The pro-Allies saw no objection, provided that Ludendorff's operations in the East were strictly controlled. Sometimes their eyes were turned towards the Far East. "Do you know," said one of them to me, "there is a rumour that the Japanese are advancing to the Urals and will be here before Christmas?" His eyes sparkled at the thought of getting back to his estate again with the assistance of the yellow men's bayonets. And when it seemed that the Japanese were not hurrying to move east of Lake Baikal, this same "patriotic" son of the Russian aristocracy asked me if I thought the French could spare sufficient African troops, or the British some Indians, to come up across the Caucasus and enter Central Russia. Germans, Allies, Japanese, Chinese or niggers—all were welcome in Russia, if they would only re-establish these aristocrats in their ancestral privileges and punish their peasants with a law of blood and iron. What I overheard in this house convinced me that national feeling is only a very superficial factor in human psychology. Beyond a certain point fundamental social prejudices alone are operative in the formation of will-power.

On September 5th I thought the last hour of the Soviet Republic had really struck. That evening an agent of the Right S.R.'s, Kaplan, fired two shots at Lenin as he was leaving a workmen's meeting in Moscow, dangerously wounding him. On the same day Right S.R. agents assassinated two Commissars of the Petrograd Soviet, the well-known Communists, Uritsky and Volodarsky. At the same time rumours were spread that the Czecho-Slovaks were advancing on Nijni Novgorod, and Krasnoff on Voronesch. Fires also broke out in the petroleum tanks (the last fuel store for the winter) on the outskirts of Moscow. So terrible did the situation appear that I was preparing to take refuge in some remote village, where I might be able to snatch a few weeks to write the reminiscences of the previous eighteen months before I fell a victim to the oncoming White Terror.

But I had not reckoned with the Central Committee of the

Communist Party, which was now the sole power controlling the Soviets. The very hopelessness of the situation seemed to endow the men who sat on this Committee with superhuman will and energy. They were mostly men whose names were at that time not well known to the outer world. Lenin was lying at death's door, and Trotsky was away on the south-eastern front, trying to rally the small Red Army contingents against an overwhelmingly superior enemy. Radek, Djerzhinsky, Peters, Sverdloff, Stalyn and Bela Kun seem to have been the most prominent in their respective capacities in this supreme crisis. I shall never forget one of the *Izvestia* articles for Saturday, September 7th. There was no mistaking its meaning. The Red Terror had begun. It was proposed to take hostages from the former officers of the Tsar's army, from the Cadets, and from the families of the Moscow and Petrograd middle classes, and to shoot ten for every Communist who fell a victim to the White Terror. Shortly after a decree was issued by the Central Soviet Executive, ordering all officers of the old army within the territories of the Republic to report on a certain day at certain places. A terrible panic resulted among the Moscow middle classes, as I could see from the conversations which I heard at the Tolstoy's house. Some of the visitors counselled submission to the decree, while others swore resistance to the last. Why fear? said these; the Red tyrants would not remain in power for more than a few days, and those arrested would be able to laugh at their gaolers, for deliverance was close at hand; the Allies were moving south, the Czecho-Slovaks steadily west, and Krasnoff north.

And this, in fact, was one of the reasons which the Communists gave for the Red Terror. Conspirators could only be convinced that the Soviet Republic was powerful enough to be respected, if it was able to punish its enemies. But nothing would convince those enemies except the fear of death, because all were persuaded that the Soviet Republic was falling. Given these circumstances, it is difficult to see what weapon the Communists could have used to get their will respected. All the restraints of so-called civilization had been swept aside, and both Reds and Whites, were in the throes of a struggle in which physical force was the deciding factor. The Whites felt that they were saving what they called Russia from the tyranny of a minority, and were intending, if victorious, to restore the social order they had always known, tempered with what they vaguely called "Western Democracy." The Reds knew they were a minority, facing another minority, with a majority of waverers and undecided neutrals, who would be influenced by the fortunes of the struggle.

They felt that they stood for a nobler, higher order of society than that which they had overthrown. It was therefore a question, which of these two minorities had the strongest moral conviction; which of them had the most courage and belief in themselves. Even assuming that both sides had the same strength of conviction, I believe that both were right in appealing to the sword, i.e. to Terror. For if one side had used force, and the other had relied only on moral strength, the latter's ideas would have remained for ever but pious phrases, while the former's alone would have been engraved on the scrolls of history for later generations to read, mark and learn. But I can testify from observation on the spot that the scales were uneven. The Whites had prejudiced their cause by calling in the aid of the foreigner. Beaten in square fight before the gates of Petrograd in November 1917, beaten at Mogilieff, beaten in the thousand and one little fights, in which the Soviets throughout the length and breadth of the Russian plain had established their authority, since the fall of the Kerensky Coalition, the Whites had now called in the foreigner. And in what capacity did the foreigner come? He had not intervened in the first days of the November Revolution, because he regarded the Soviets as a joke and the Bolsheviks as clowns. But when he saw that the Soviets were not jokes, that the clowns were capable of annulling Tsarist war loans and the tribute of sweat and blood which the French usurer had for decades been levying on the Russian workman and peasant, then they changed their policy and listened to the call of the Whites. And the mere fact that the Whites had not shrunk from this act weakened their moral fibre, undermined their confidence in themselves. From now on it was only a question whether the Reds could summon sufficient material force to their aid to repel the foreign invaders. The revolutionary war began to assume a more and more national character.

Needless to say, the Terror, however justifiable as a weapon in the revolutionary war, produced deplorable excesses on both sides. Of the officers in the Tsarist army who reported in Petrograd, 500 were seized and executed without trial. A large number of them were innocent men, who were simply sacrificed to strike terror into the hearts of the Whites. Similar horrors took place in the territories occupied by the Czecho-Slovaks and Krasnoff's Cossacks. It is useless to dwell upon them, but it is necessary to record and emphasize the fact that foreign assistance to the Russian Whites was the principal cause of the intense bitterness of the struggle, which made excesses on a large scale on both sides inevitable. Nevertheless, the

few thousand lives sacrificed during the worst period of the Red Terror did not amount to a fraction of those millions sacrificed by the Imperialists in the European War.*

The days which followed the execution of the 500 officers in Petrograd were the worst period of the Red Terror. A Conference of the Central Soviet Executive and All-Russian Trade Unions, which I attended in Moscow on September 10th, and at which a representative of the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution read a report, declared "death to all traitors" and "merciless war on the foreign invaders." The whole of the territories of the Soviet Republic were declared under martial law. The Extraordinary Commission was given power to arrest, and to execute within twenty-four hours of sentence, without appeal, all persons within the zone of the Red armies who should be found guilty of treason. Outside the zone of the armies, notice had to be given of impending executions to the Council of the People's Commissars, who retained the power to quash the sentence before the twenty-four hours were up. The Conference further decided to expel from the Central Soviet Executive the handful of Menshevik delegates, who still sat there by virtue of the right of representation given to political parties. The reason given was that these delegates were remaining neutral in the struggle, and in this way were assisting the counter-revolution. A decree was published declaring the Soviet Republic in supreme danger and calling all able-bodied workmen to the Red Army. The proceedings of the Conference were calm and businesslike throughout. I was struck with the absence of panic or of ebullition of animal spirits. It was also decided to hold special meetings every Saturday till further notice in every factory throughout the Republic, in order to explain the situation to the workers. The Central Committee of the Communist Party was to take this work in hand and to report to the Central Soviet Executive.

These Saturday afternoon factory meetings became an important feature all through this crisis. I attended several in the suburbs of Moscow during September. The yards of the factories were in most cases being turned into drill grounds for the Red Army recruits. Every Saturday detachments, after

* The Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-revolution announced in the *Izvestia*, in March 1920, that 9,641 persons were executed in the course of 1919 by order of the Commission, and just over 6,000 during the last four months of 1918. After the defeat of Denikin and Koltchak, martial law and the death sentence were abolished for a few months, till the Allies, through the Poles, launched the offensive of May 1920. Then between June 15th and July 15th 893 persons were executed, according to the report of the Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal.

ten days' training, marched away from these yards to the railway stations, where they entrained for the front amid crowds of demonstrators with Red flags. Foremost amongst the revolutionary fighting regiments were the metal workers of Petrograd and the textile workers of Moscow, while Bela Kun organized special battalions of Hungarian Communists, former war prisoners. Nor were the sailors of the Baltic Fleet behind. After superhuman efforts, they brought a fleet of destroyers from Kronstadt up the Neva and through the difficult Marinsky system to the Volga, to be made ready for a grand bombardment of the Czechoslovak lines round Kazan.

Trotsky, meanwhile, was touring every sector of the front. His great task was to secure unity and centralization of the military command. In this he had endless difficulty. The spirit of the partisan Red Guards was still strong in many of the provinces. The Anarchist elements among the "middle peasantry" objected to discipline from above. A number of Red Guard units, formerly under Left S.R. leadership, were operating on the south-east front against Krasnoff. They elected their own leaders, advanced, retired and rested when it pleased them. Often they put the disciplined Red Army units on their flanks into danger of being outflanked and surrounded. The situation had become intolerable, and Trotsky decided to act. He sent these Red Guard units an ultimatum, ordering them to submit to the commands of the General Staff of the southern front, or to give up their arms. As they did not reply, he moved an armoured train down to the spot where they were operating and gave them ten minutes to surrender. Faced with this argument, they had nothing to do but to lay down their arms. The largest irregular Red Guard unit was now dissolved. Thus vanished a picturesque feature of the early stages of the Russian Revolution. These Red Guard irregulars had done great work in their day. They had beaten Kerensky, overthrown Korniloff and Kaledin, but they were no use against the disciplined and well-armed forces of the international counter-revolution.

The militarization of the Revolution had already gone far. A system of political Commissars was now introduced by Trotsky into every unit of the Red Army. The commanders, from the division down to the battalion, and the specialists of the former Tsarist Army, who expressed their willingness to work for remuneration, were thus controlled by a network of political Commissars, who were for the most part Communists or selected by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The strictest discipline was enforced. I remember reading in the *Izvestia*

early in October the first announcement of the execution of ten Red Army soldiers on the southern front for disobedience, cowardice and drunkenness. The employment of specialists of the former Tsarist army, which had been so bitterly and so successfully opposed by the Anarchists and the Left S.R.'s till the first days of July, was now carried through by a simple decree of the Central Soviet Executive. High salaries also were voted to those who would conscientiously give of their knowledge and skill to the Republic in the hour of its distress. There were no "revolutionary purists" to protest now. The Communists said these were only temporary expedients, but observers were inclined to be sceptical.

These heroic measures were not slow in bearing fruit. On September 15th a grand attack of the eastern section of the Red Army began under the personal supervision of Trotsky against the Czecho-Slovak lines before Kazan. The attack was completely successful, and the city fell on September 17th. The Petrograd metal workers distinguished themselves in the battle, as did also the sailors operating the destroyers on the Volga. A wave of unparalleled rejoicing swept over Petrograd and Moscow at this news. It seemed that the tide had turned, and that the Soviet Republic would indeed defeat its enemies. Great processions were organized in all the industrial centres of the north. Collections were made in the factories and in the Soviet bureaux for the Red Army, and presents of cigarettes were sent to the front. The Central Soviet Executive decreed the order of the Red Flag for bravery in action. One almost began to breathe the atmosphere of the August days of 1914. And yet there was something new in the air now. For the first time in history a working-class army had come into being and had actually proved that it could fight and defeat, in the first round at any rate, the hirelings of its class opponents. The effect was magical, too, upon the waverers. People, who had been doubters, began to praise the Communists. Several foreigners in Moscow, who up to now had been sceptical of the Soviets' capacity to do anything but talk, began to be infected by the triumphant revolutionary spirit.

The next two weeks brought further victories. Simbirsk and Syzran fell, and the Czecho-Slovaks were driven back on Samara. On October 5th an encircling movement from the west, south and north was commenced on Samara. This ended on the 9th with the capture of the city by the Red Army and with the freeing of the navigation of the Volga. Three weeks remained before the ice would come down on the river, and in

this time heroic feats were performed by the Baltic sailors and the Volga transport workers in bringing up corn and liquid fuel from the south to the starving towns of the north. But in spite of all their efforts, the prospects of feeding and warming the industrial centres in the coming winter were poor in the extreme. The plans of the French Military Mission and of the "National Centre" to cut off the workmen of the northern towns from food and fuel, as a punishment for having annulled the Tsarist loans, had to a large extent succeeded.

By the middle of October the internal situation, resulting from the victories of the Red Armies in the East, was as follows. The "middle peasants" were already showing unmistakable signs of a desire for a *rapprochement* with the urban workers and with the half-proletariat of the villages. This change of sentiment was the natural result of events. The complete restoration, which they had seen with their own eyes, of the old social order in the districts occupied by the Czecho-Slovaks had convinced them that the Right S.R.'s were unable, with all their "democratic" phrases, to resist the powerful forces of reaction, which followed them wherever they went. Thus, as soon as they saw that the victory of the Czecho-Slovaks meant the return of the landlords to their estates, their attitude to the Communists began to change from one of sullen hostility to one of cautious friendliness. They had for the most part abandoned the Left S.R.'s. They remained as sheep without a shepherd, waiting for the sound of some bell to guide them to a shelter. On the other hand, the kulak and rich farmer class in the south-eastern provinces and the Right S.R.'s had so completely compromised themselves with the foreigners that their influence on the course of events from this time forth vanished. In the regions occupied by the Whites they continued to hold seats in the Governments set up by foreign bayonets, and in the capacity of "Ministers" they still tried to influence the Allied Military Missions and the "National Centre." In the territories of the Soviet Republic the kulaks fared badly. They were mercilessly deprived of all surplus corn, and left unpaid in punishment for their support of the Whites. Their land allotments were cut down again to the level of the rest of the village community.

During the autumn of 1918 I used nearly every week to make a journey for two or three days to outlying districts in the provinces of Moscow, Tver, Tula and Smolensk. The immediate object of these journeys was to obtain for the Tolstoy household a sack of potatoes or a few pounds of skinny meat. For, though working in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs,

I did not live in one of the big "working communes," in which most of the employees of the Commissariats ate and slept. I still held out in one of the few and ever-diminishing islands of bourgeois economy and enjoyed the amenities of this disappearing social order. I thus became for the week-ends a *meshochnik* and made myself liable to be brought before the Extraordinary Commission. Still, I was able to excuse myself by the fact that the "working communes" were too full to take up any more members, and new ones had not yet been organized.

On these journeys I had plenty of opportunities of coming into contact with various classes of the peasantry and finding out their different points of view. I remember observing that during August the influence of the Central Soviet Executive did not reach very far beyond a strip of twenty versts on each side of the railway lines in the outlying provinces which I visited. Thus in the little provincial town of Morjaisk, which I reached after a day's ride in an open railway truck, the local peasant Soviet had been "purged" by a "Committee of the Poorer Peasantry," for the most part working youths, who had been thrown out of employment in Moscow by the war and the blockade. The Peasant Soviet had issued orders to the surrounding village Soviets to provide them with an inventory of the implements and stock on the former landlords' demesnes. They had also prohibited the export of food from the district, except through the local Commissar for Food. Not one reply had been received about the landlords' inventories at the end of August, although the order had been out six weeks, and the railway station was crowded with *meshochniks* smuggling flour into Moscow. I visited Morjaisk a month later and found a very different state of affairs. Two Soviet farms had been established in the neighbourhood on former landlords' demesne farms, and everyone was mercilessly searched for articles of food on entering and leaving the station. I was not allowed to take back to Moscow more than fifteen pounds of potatoes and three pounds of meat. The rest of my purchases were sternly requisitioned and paid for at the very low fixed price allowed by the Food Commissar. It was a most remarkable and most hopeful sign of the times—this increase of order and discipline, even in the rural districts. But this "order zone" did not even now extend further than about forty versts from the railway. Outside this zone it appeared that no one heard anything of "Commissars' decrees" or of Committees of Poorer Peasants. "We don't belong to any party in our village," said one peasant from a far-off spot to me; "we are our own party; we won't have the Cadets, because

they are landlords and capitalists, and we don't want the Bolsheviks. They say the Bolsheviks are coming to our village; one of their Commissars was in the neighbourhood last week. If they come, we shall have to make some arrangement with them, for they are in power in Petrograd and Moscow." This, I think, fairly accurately depicts the state of mind of the "middle peasants" in the remoter rural districts of Central Russia at this time. And they were probably the least favourable to the Soviets, for, unlike the peasants in the Ukraine and the Lower Volga, they had not experienced a period of occupation by the Whites. Yet even they were ready to tolerate the "Communards."

On another occasion I visited the little town of Kumri in the Tver province. Here was a large "middle peasant" element, mostly engaged in domestic industry and in the cultivation of potatoes and flax. A considerable half-proletarian element also lived there, working in the textile mills along the railway to Moscow. A visit to the *traktirs* (public tea-rooms) revealed the fact that the little rural society was in a great state of ferment. The war with the Whites was discussed, and the chances of success over the foreign troops were carefully weighed. On the whole the war seemed not unpopular, and I heard the word "capitalist" more than once applied to the English and French Governments, showing that months of Bolshevik propaganda had begun to make them acquainted with revolutionary terminology. On internal questions there were great complaints at the low fixed prices and a certain hankering for free trade in food products. Those engaged in domestic industry objected to the attempts of the Commissars to bring their *artels* under the control of the Council of Public Economy and to regulate their prices and sales. On the other hand, voices were heard defending the Commissars and pointing to the war forced on the Republic by the foreign bondholders, which compelled the strictest discipline, in order to fight the general scarcity and to provide something for everyone. These discussions in the public places were the best proof that the second agrarian revolution was slowly spreading in the remoter districts and was accelerated by the onslaught of the international counter-revolution.

CHAPTER XXII

COLLAPSE OF GERMAN IMPERIALISM—NEW DANGER TO THE REVOLUTION

ON August 27th a protocol was signed in Moscow and Berlin by the German and the Soviet diplomatic representatives, revising certain provisions of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The new clauses were distinctly more favourable to the Soviet Republic than the original Treaty. Exchange of manufactured goods for food products was permitted between Soviet Russia and the Skoropadsky regime in the Ukraine. In view of the partial payment by the Soviets of the gold indemnity under the treaty, the German troops in the Baltic and western occupied provinces were to retire to a new line running from Pskoff and Dvinsk to Borisoff. Further retirements were to take place according as the rest of the indemnity was paid. The amount of the payment was reduced by a sum estimated at the time to amount to about 1½ milliard gold roubles, and the German Government undertook to recognize the "socialization laws" of the Soviet Republic. The Bolsheviks were jubilant on the signing of this protocol. They claimed it as the result of Lenin's diplomacy, which had been, they said, justified a thousand times over. Indeed, it was clear that the Imperialists of the Central Powers would never have made these concessions if they had not been compelled to do so by developments in other places. And it was exactly on these developments that the *realpolitik* of Lenin relied.

Moscow learnt on September 29th that the Bulgarian front had collapsed, and that the Central Powers were now open to an Allied attack through the Balkans. The Germans in the West were in full retreat. This news evoked the wildest excitement in Soviet Russia. The *Izvestia* came out with great headlines announcing the "collapse of world Imperialism" and the coming of the social revolution. At a special meeting of the Moscow Trade Union Council on the following day I heard Lenin make a long speech on the international situation. He offered

the support of one million Red soldiers and all the material resources of the Soviet Republic, including trains of food from the southern provinces, to the German workers, if they should overthrow the Kaiser's Government and get into difficulties with the Entente. The speech was clearly meant for propaganda purposes in Berlin, and Lenin had not ill-judged the moment for such a *démarche*, for two days later news came of the resignation of the German Chancellor. That evening, at a sitting of the Central Soviet Executive, Kameneff read a telegram from Berlin announcing the appointment of Prince Max von Baden as Imperial Chancellor with the task of reforming the German constitution and making a democratic peace with the Allies on the basis of Wilson's fourteen points. I shall not readily forget the howls of derision which greeted this announcement. "He won't stay in long; Liebknecht will see to that," was roared from the lusty throats of enthusiastic delegates. The contempt which the Russian revolutionaries had for such people as Prince Max von Baden, and particularly for Wilson and his fourteen points, can hardly be adequately described. An instinct, which as events have shown was extraordinarily correct, told them that these persons with their democratic programmes were just puppets, put up by distressed reaction to divert attention from real issues. Practical evidence of this contempt was soon forthcoming. It will be remembered that the new German Government appealed first to President Wilson, asking for his good offices in securing a peace on the basis of his fourteen points, and that the latter, in reply, demanded that the German submarine warfare and other inhumanities should cease. This was the opportunity for the Soviets. A Note to President Wilson was immediately prepared in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. This Note surpassed in pungent wit and biting sarcasm anything which had as yet been produced by that office. The writer had occasion to sit up all night assisting in translating it into English. Basing its argument upon the fourteen points, the Note recorded the fact that the Soviet Republic had, from the first days of its existence, expressed its willingness to make peace on the basis of the fourteen points, and recalled the President's own reference in March of that year to the "acid test," which Russia provided for the sincerity of the Allies' policy. Assuming the offensive then, the Note expressed the horror which the Soviet Government felt, in agreement with the President, at the atrocities of the Germans, and asked him if, in view of his refusal to deal with the Germans till they had given up submarine warfare and other attacks on life and property, he

would also refuse to deal with the Czecho-Slovaks until they had restored the gold in the Russian State Bank and the hostages whom they had, at the bidding of the French Military Mission, removed from Kazan on their evacuation of that place. Would the President consent to have dealings with the Soviets, although, being a government of urban workers and of poor peasants, they did not represent the form of government which he approved of? The Soviets did not in principle approve of the form of government which President Wilson represented, that being a government of stock-jobbers and finance-capitalists; but this did not prevent them from sending him this Note and from expressing their readiness to make peace with him and to open economic relations. The Note, of course, was not answered, and the Allied censors took good care that it did not reach their respective publics except in a distorted form.

On November 2nd came the news of a revolution in Hungary, which had declared its independence and set up a republic with a coalition government of democratic and Socialist parties. The wave of enthusiasm rose still higher in the towns of Soviet Russia. Everyone connected with the Soviets was firmly convinced that the world revolution had already begun. The Central Powers were believed to be passing through a "Kerensky period," which would not last long and would soon make way for Communist Soviets on the whole European continent. In the midst of these stirring events I remember having occasion to see Lenin in his rooms in the Kremlin. In the course of conversation on a number of other subjects, he referred to the international situation. I was surprised to find that he did not seem to share the prevailing optimism about the imminence of the world revolution. On the contrary, he seemed to think that the events in Central Europe might expose the Soviet Republic to new and greater dangers. His eyes were fixed on the shores of the Black Sea, where he seemed to discern Allied fleets passing through an open Dardanelles and landing well-trained armies, equipped with tanks and the latest inventions of scientific warfare, on the coast of South Russia. "What can we put up against these, if they really send them?" he said, "and if the Allied soldiers really obey their rulers and march?" "And," he added in a thoughtful vein, "I fear that the social revolution in Central Europe is developing too slowly to provide us with any assistance from that quarter." Shortly after leaving Lenin, I happened to see a copy of the *Kreuz Zeitung*. In a leading article in one of its numbers for the first week of October the Prussian militarist organ pointed to the great work now lying before Germany,

who, though unable to attain her aims in the West, could win for herself a place in the council of nations by suppressing Bolshevism in the East. "In the fight against the Soviets," it said, "the Allies and the Germans can find the bridge across which they can unite their 'kulturs' and save the civilization of Europe." Perhaps, after all, Lenin was right, and a new period of intense danger was before the Soviet Republic.

But revolutionary opinion would tolerate no croaking. Was not the anniversary of the November Revolution at hand? The Soviet Republic had lived for a whole year and was fighting its way through a world of enemies. Moscow was being decked with all the devices which revolutionary artists could think of. Gigantic red banners waved in the principal squares, which were renamed, the "Red Square" in place of the former "Imperial Theatre Square," "Soviet Square" in place of the "Square of General Skobelev." The statues of the former Romanoff Emperors were all being pulled down and replaced by statues of famous revolutionaries of past generations. This evoked the popular jest that the Extraordinary Commission, in its zeal for hunting out treason, would not even tolerate the presence of counter-revolutionary monuments in the Red capitals of Petrograd and Moscow. Then the stalls of the *Ohotny Ryad* (the fruit and game market in the centre of the city) were painted the weirdest colours, the latest efforts of futurism. Everywhere colour ran riot. "It is rebelling against convention and against all the rules of respectable bourgeois art," said my American Anarchist friend, who was also an artist and in love with these new and, to a layman, rather frightening forms of expression. After the terrible days of July, August and September one seemed to feel that the old spirit of revolutionary enthusiasm, so strong in the masses in the first November days, was again appearing, but this time in the æsthetic sphere. My mind went back at once to 1793—the 20th day of Brumaire, when the great Convention did homage to the Goddess of Reason in Notre Dame. To-day no formal deity was set up on high and honoured. There were no signs of Deism in this Carnival of November 7, 1918. The new God was everywhere. He resided in the heart of everyone who took part in the ceremonies of that day, and who was inspired by the great impulse to struggle for a new social order. His symbol was seen on the great banner that hung from the First House of the Soviets (former Hôtel Metropole), where the gigantic figure of a half-naked workman was welding a sword to defeat the Republic's enemies. Another of his symbols was

the great red axe, which in the "Red Square" lay half embedded in a gigantic white block, labelled in huge letters, "The White Guards." Another was the banner which floated from the House of the All-Russian Trade Union Council, depicting a golden sun, rising upon a crossed sickle and hammer, the emblem of labour in field and factory. Everywhere his symbols were seen that day, denoting struggle—the essence of life. And his voice was heard in the speeches of the revolutionary leaders, before the great procession of over a million people (more than half the population of Moscow), who, with flags flying and bands playing, marched in orderly procession past the great stands under the shadow of Moscow's historic Kremlin. I heard only the last words that were said, for I was myself in the procession and only came before the Kremlin walls after four o'clock in the afternoon. Then the Moscow garrison of the Red Army marched past, batteries of Red artillery rolled by, and the newly organized Red Officers Cadet Corps paraded. And as the darkness crept over the snow-laden sky of on-coming winter, the huge crowds dispersed, and the first great anniversary of the November Revolution came to an end. The worship of the "World Spirit" that produces change in nature and man had been, perhaps unconsciously, performed that day.

On the following day the Sixth Soviet Congress was to meet in the Great Theatre. The changed international situation had prompted the Central Soviet Executive to call for new elections, in order to keep touch with the provinces and to explain to the backwoods Soviets what was happening outside Russia. The delegates to this Congress were 80 per cent. Communists. The Left S.R.'s as a party had now ceased to exist. A small fraction of the old party, which had not been compromised in the July *coup d'état* had survived. This remnant had secured some thirty delegates at the Congress and represented that element among the "middle peasantry," which was anxious for a reconciliation with the Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks had been excluded by the decree of the Central Soviet Executive the previous month, and that decree had not yet been repealed. Thus one had the feeling on the first day of the Congress, that were it not for the extremely exciting developments in Central Europe, the delegates would simply have heard Commissars' reports and criticized, passed, or amended, decrees of a purely administrative nature. In other words, it seemed that the Congress was going to be one more proof of the increasing tendency to convert the Soviet institutions into organs of a vast bureaucracy and of a State capitalist system. And this atmosphere, indeed, did pervade

the Congress on the first day, while the reports of the Army, Food and Justice Commissariats were being read and discussed. But towards evening Sverdloff rose from the presidential chair and read a telegram announcing that the German Government had just expelled the Soviet Ambassador, Joffe, with all his staff from Berlin, on the grounds, firstly, that under the cover of the Russian diplomatic bag, revolutionary propaganda had been carried on in the German army; and, secondly, that the Soviet Government had not yet given satisfaction for the murder of Count Mirbach. The news was greeted with cries of derision, which turned into yells of satisfaction when Radek announced that the German Consulate and War Prisoners' Commission would be at once expelled, and that hostages had already been taken by the Extraordinary Commission, who had arrested a number of German agents, known to be engaged in speculation and counter-revolutionary propaganda. Feeling was now running high. "That is what we get from a Max von Baden Cabinet," was heard from the delegates. "We will reply by tearing up the Brest Treaty." At two o'clock in the morning Radek rose and read a telegram announcing that the German fleet at Kiel had hoisted the Red flag, and had sent greetings to the Russian Red fleet in Kronstadt. I don't think I shall ever forget the scene which followed. Every delegate in the Congress rose and yelled. The roar of cheers lasted for ten minutes. "That is the best answer they can get," several delegates cried, while the President read the message of congratulation which the Congress proposed to send by wireless to Kiel. In the small hours of the morning the delegates went to their sleeping quarters. In the corridors of the theatre I met my German friend, Dr. Alfons Pacquet, the correspondent of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. He was rather taken aback by the news, and not a little afraid that the Extraordinary Commission would lay hands on him, as he said they had laid hands on several members of the German Consulate and Commissions already. But he had become infected by the spirit of the Russian Revolution and, unlike most of his countrymen who had lived in Russia during these times, he had conscientiously tried to understand the great drama which was being acted before his eyes. "If a Socialist Government arises in Berlin, I shall telegraph at once to offer it my services," he said: "perhaps we too shall have Soviets." On the afternoon of the next day (November 9th) the Congress heard that a Soviet had indeed been formed in Berlin and that the Kaiser had abdicated. The President read a decree of the Council of the People's Commissars, annulling the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. This

was adopted unanimously. The following day was declared a public holiday, and a congratulatory message was drawn up to be sent to the Berlin Soviet. That evening there were great public meetings, at which the speakers referred confidently to the social revolution which had already begun in Europe, and foreshadowed the end of the isolation of the Russian Soviet Republic. A tremendous crowd went round to the old German Embassy and greeted the German and Austrian war prisoners, who elected a Soviet, expelled the old diplomats and their staff, and took over full control.

November 10th was taken up with processions and demonstrations. The foundation-stone of a new "Soviet Mansion" was laid in all solemnity by the President of the Moscow Soviet, Kameneff. Former German and Austrian prisoners were welcomed at the ceremony and spoke on behalf of the newly formed German Workers' Council. That evening I was invited to be present at a supper in honour of the German Revolution. At nine o'clock, when even the most hard-worked Commissariats had closed down for the night, I repaired to the banqueting hall of the old monastery in the Kremlin, opposite the Ivan bell-tower. Here I found a gathering of prominent Russian revolutionaries. Most of the Council of the People's Commissars were present, except Lenin, who austerey avoided all jollifications, even for such events as the German Revolution. Perhaps he had an inkling of what this "revolution" really was, as his conversation with me a few days before seemed to suggest. Trotsky, too, was absent, being engaged in one of his tours of inspection at the front. There was the gigantic form of Stekloff, fresh from pounding the Governments of the Allies with the heavy artillery of his pen in the leader of next day's *Izvestia*. And there was Rykoff, the President of the Council of Public Economy, earnestly engaged in discussing with Tomskey, the energetic little President of the All-Russian Trade Union Council, the prospects of obtaining again Ukrainian corn and Don coal, as the result of the impending collapse of Prussian militarism in these regions. And there was Piatakoff, dressed in a long sheepskin cloak and a pointed fur cap with revolver at his side, looking for all the world like the "Zaparozhny" brigands in the stories of Shefchenko. He had been one of the chief organizers of the revolutionary bands in the Ukraine, which had done such damage to the German armies of occupation. There was Radek, bubbling with wit, and describing with a little poetic imagination the scenes which were going on in Berlin at this time. Litvinoff, just returned from Stockholm, was there; also Stalyn and

Tsurupa, the Commissars respectively of Nationalities and of Food. And in and out of the hilarious company stalked the tall, thin figure of a young man with unshaven chin and long blonde hair. It was Djerzhinsky, the much-feared President of the Extraordinary Commission for the Fight with the Counter-Revolution. He seemed to speak with hardly anyone, and appeared to be thinking out problems of dealing with the Entente's agents and spies. "We shall see that he gets a good meal," jokingly said someone, "and then we shall be safe from the attentions of his Commission."

But the meal was very frugal. Even a German Revolution did not call forth a display of luxury. I don't think we had more than the extra food ration, which the Moscow Soviet had granted on the anniversary day of the November Revolution. The only luxury was the white bread, which some considerate Commissar had brought up with him from the Ukraine. The strongest drink we had was coffee. After toasts to the "World Revolution" and to "Communists in all Lands," and after innumerable speeches, punctuated by roars of merriment from the corner of the hall where Radek sat, turning out jokes at the piecework rate, the whole company rose. Someone started a gramophone. Then in the small hours of that winter morning, within sound of the great bell of the Kremlin and within a stone's throw of the spot where past generations of the Romanoff Tsars lay buried, these very human people, the leaders of a movement which has shaken thrones, frightened Governments and transformed the face of a large part of Europe and Asia, set to work to dance. I could imagine the indignation of the former ecclesiastical dignitaries of this monastery, whose portraits hung on the walls, if they had witnessed the very inferior Polish mazurka which was danced in that hall by the writer in partnership with Madame Litvinoff.

Those giddy days soon went by. It was necessary to let a short time pass before one could form an approximate idea of what had happened in Central Europe. Then it began to be clear that Lenin's conservative estimate of the revolution that had taken place in Germany was probably the correct one. But some people in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs seemed to think otherwise. They suffered from the very natural weakness of seeing what they desired to see. They were convinced that Liebknecht at the head of a Berlin Soviet was virtually, if not nominally, in control of the Government, and they would not take the view that it was only a "Scheidemann revolution." The first rude awakening came on November 17th. The Com-

missariat for Foreign Affairs had, immediately on receipt of the news of the revolution in Germany, telegraphed to the *Volksbeauftragte* (Council of the People's Commissioners) in Berlin greetings and an offer of food and material support to the workers of Germany in their struggle against their own reactionaries and the Allied Imperialists. Two train-loads of wheat were immediately despatched from Moscow to the western frontier to be handed over to the German soldiers' councils. This telegram was left for several days unanswered, and when the answer came, it was clear that the "People's Commissioners" in Berlin were of a very different type from their Moscow counterparts. The Independent Socialist leader Haase, who had control of the Foreign Office, while thanking the Russian Soviet Government for its generous offer, regretted that the two train-loads could not be accepted, as it was understood the Russian workmen and peasants required food urgently themselves. As regards the return of the Soviet Ambassador Joffe, this was still under consideration, but if permitted, would entail that the Soviet Government must pledge itself not to interfere in the internal affairs of Germany.

The disillusionment which this reply caused can be readily imagined. But it did not seem to damp the ardour of those optimists among the Russian Communists' foreign experts who persisted in seeing in the events of November 9th in Germany the first stages of a social revolution. They continued their endeavour to get in touch with Liebknecht and the German Spartacists, and were moving heaven and earth to get their delegates to the Congress of German Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils, which was understood to be about to be held in Berlin early in December. But the German Soldiers' Councils in the Baltic provinces, Lithuania and White Russia were, to the horror of Moscow, discovered to be largely in the hands of officers of the Prussian army, who would not allow anyone from Soviet Russia to pass. Indeed, they held Joffe and his staff prisoners for several days as hostages for the safety of the German Consul and members of the War Prisoners' Commission in Moscow. These events gave rise to a heated controversy between the Russian Communists and the German Independents, which continued with intermissions for the next eighteen months. The Russians accused the German Independents of being tools in the hands of the old Prussian bureaucracy, whose activities had been entirely unaffected by the Revolution. They accused them of being intellectually in bondage to Kautsky and other "opportunists," whose hatred of the Russian Communists was such that they

preferred to coquette with Wilson and the Entente Imperialists rather than have any dealings with Moscow.¹

The German Independents replied that the Russian Soviet Government, in its communications after the 9th of November, had requested the right to send agitators into Germany to work among the English and French war prisoners, who were still in the country.² It was stated that this would have been a violation of the armistice terms and would have meant either the continuation of the war, which was a physical impossibility for Germany, or an Allied military occupation. The German Independents pointed also to the necessity for Germany to secure peace with the Entente Imperialists, and claimed with some justice that they were only following the example of the Soviet Government itself, which had recognized *force majeure* and had signed a robber peace with German Imperialism. Without doubt the optimists among the Russian Communists were guilty of a grave error of judgment in pressing at this time for an immediate union between a Soviet Russia and a Soviet Germany, without taking the trouble to see whether the latter had really come into existence or was likely to do so in the near future. More than one of them were dreaming of a Russo-German Red Army defending the European social revolution against Entente Imperialism on the banks of the Rhine. This excess of warlike zeal—excusable, when one remembers the cynical attacks of the Entente Imperialists on the Soviet Republic—led to a considerable estrangement between the Russian Communists and the politically inexperienced leaders of German Socialism. It weakened, moreover, the German Spartacists by making them appear as the warmongers, anxious to convert the national war into a revolutionary one. In the then-existing pacifist state of German mass-psychology, the idea of Russo-German Red Armies on the Rhine, fighting Entente Imperialism, roused keen opposition and enabled the Kautsky and Scheidemann Socialists, who had risen into power with the fall of the Hohenzollerns, to appear as harbingers of peace. Germany, in fact, required a "breathing space," similar to that which Lenin had secured at Brest-Litovsk. This "breathing space" might indeed have to be a long one.

But if one may criticize this tactical failure of the Russian

¹ This indictment was set forth at length in the reply of the Third International to the German Independents' request for information on the conditions of entry into the International, published by the West European Secretariat, Communist International, February 1920.

² Reply of Central Committee of the German Independents to the Moscow International, published Berlin, May 1920.

Communists in dealing with the first phases of the revolution in Central Europe, there is little to be said for the so-called "Socialists" who got into power in Germany on November 9th, and who influenced the foreign policy of the *Volksbeauftragte*. In this matter particularly a most sinister rôle was played by the Independent Socialist leaders. At this time there were three Independent Socialists, Haase, Dittmann and Barth on the *Volksbeauftragte*, while the Independent theoretician Kautsky was in charge of a department of the Foreign Office. Early in December it became necessary to appoint a successor to Dr. Solf, who was too much compromised in Pan-German war policy to carry weight with the Entente. Kautsky now proposed that Graf Brockdorf-Rantzau should take Solf's place, and the Independent leaders, Haase and Dittmann, at a sitting of the *Volksbeauftragte* on December 23rd, voted with the Majority Socialist Commissioners, Ebert, Scheidemann and Landsberg, for the appointment of Brockdorf-Rantzau, Barth voting alone against.¹ Graf Brockdorf-Rantzau, however, put forward a number of conditions under which he was prepared to take office. The most important of these are seen in the following passage of his memorandum to the *Volksbeauftragte*:² "I consider it absolutely essential that the severest measures be taken against Bolshevik propaganda and its leaders, even up to the last consequences. Otherwise I see no way out of the situation. It is the duty of a conscientious Government to shed no unnecessary blood, but developments will force us to the strongest measures, if we are not to be overwhelmed ourselves in blood. . . . Furthermore, employers must feel safe in carrying out their work. Therefore it is necessary with all caution to restrict the competence of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils."

Graf Brockdorf-Rantzau's conditions were accepted, and he entered the Foreign Office as Permanent Secretary. Thus, whatever may have been their intentions, the Independent leaders Haase, Dittmann and Kautsky were instrumental in starting the policy of "liquidating the German Revolution" and of continuing the boycott against Soviet Russia on the ground that peace with the Entente and the fight against "internal disorder" were the first necessities. How they were rewarded is best seen by what follows. They thought they had got Wilson's fourteen points, but instead they got the Versailles Peace.

All these developments in Central Europe showed clearly

¹ *Aus der Werkstatt der Deutschen Revolution*, by Emil Barth, Verlag Hoffmann, Berlin, 1920, p. 102.

² *Graf Brockdorf-Rantzau's Documenten*, Berlin 1920, Verlag Gesellschaft fuer Politik und Geschichte.

that not only did the German Revolution bring no relief to the Soviet Republic of Russia, as the optimists in Moscow expected, but that Russia was about to enter a new period of severe trial. Lenin's estimate of the situation, as expressed in his conversation with me at the end of October, was shown to be correct. The German Revolution was developing too slowly to be of any material assistance to the Soviets, and in the meantime the Entente Imperialists, having finished with Hohenzollern Imperialism, were preparing a gigantic onslaught on Soviet Russia. Ominous signs were already at hand. Up to now the Russian Whites and the Entente Military Missions had succeeded in hiding their plans for the overthrow of the Soviet Republic under the cover of the Constituent Assembly and of a "democratic" regime, which the Bolsheviks were supposed to have broken up in Russia. At the end of October 1918 there had taken place at Ufa, in the territories occupied by the Czecho-Slovaks, a "democratic conference," at which all moderate Russian Socialists and anti-Bolsheviks were represented. The idea was to rally round the Constituent Assembly all the parties which had been scattered in those parts of the Russian borderlands which were free from the Bolsheviks. The most prominent among these was the Right S.R.'s, the party of the rich farmers and kulaks. For some time past there had been jealousy between this party and the groups of the "National Centre." The grounds of this jealousy were for the most part connected with the agrarian question. The kulaks were anxious to secure the first claim upon the landlords' estates. They therefore tried to induce the Allied Military Missions and the "National Centre" to agree to a solution of the land problem by selling the landlords' estates to the peasants. This, of course, meant favouring the rich farmer class of the south-east and western Siberia, who had made large fortunes by food speculation. In order to make this more palatable to the "National Centre," it was agreed at the Ufa Conference under the pressure of the Right S.R.'s that the Tsarist debt should be recognized by the Constituent Assembly, and that the Allies should be given large and valuable concessions in Russia. But this did not satisfy the "National Centre." This organization was coming more and more under the influence of emigrant landlords, who frequented the drawing-rooms of London and Paris, and who were in no mood to accept depreciated paper roubles from the kulaks in compensation for the abandonment of their agrarian privileges. The Right S.R.'s also found some support in the Mensheviks, who took part in the Conference. The latter had been using their influence in

favour of establishing soldiers' councils in the "National Anti-Bolshevik Army," which was assisting the Czecho-Slovaks, for they feared the increasing power of the Tsarist officers' volunteer regiments, which the "National Centre" was all the time busily organizing. Western Siberia was at this time crowded with White refugees from the territories of the Soviets. Officers of the Tsar's army, aristocrats who had lost their estates and had not enough means to get to England and France, and those among the middle classes who had escaped from Petrograd and Moscow, all made Omsk their citadel. They were preparing to launch a grand offensive against the Reds. Needless to say, a serious obstacle in their way was the "Democratic Conference" at Ufa and its military backbone, the Czecho-Slovak legions. Thus the ground was prepared for the Koltchak *coup d'état*, the establishment of the "Supreme Ruler" in Omsk and the open restoration of the old regime in the territories occupied hitherto by the Czecho-Slovaks. On November 18th the Committee of the Constituent Assembly appointed by the Ufa "Democratic Conference" was broken up at Omsk, its leaders arrested, and some prominent Mensheviks and Right S.R.'s were shot. This was an exact repetition of what had taken place at Kieff earlier in the year, when the Prussian generals dissolved the Rada and set up the Ataman Skoropadsky. Once again the "Democratic" Parties, relying on small property owners and intellectuals, showed their complete incapacity to withstand the feudal-capitalist reaction, when the latter, having no more need for their services in the fight against Bolshevism, decided to assume full control themselves. The Koltchak *coup*, however, forced the Czecho-Slovaks to take up a definite position towards the Russian Whites. To their credit it should be said that they refused to be any longer the willing tools of Russian counter-revolution. The rank and file of the Czecho-Slovak legions now understood for what purposes they had been used. Many of them had from the first unwillingly taken part in the adventure and had been largely forced by their influential commander Colonel Gaida. The latter had acted all through as their evil genius, and now that he was losing the confidence of his rank and file, he openly became one of Koltchak's generals. From this time forth the Czecho-Slovak troops took no part in the operations against the Red Army, and remained sullenly in the rear along the Siberian Railway, waiting for the first opportunity to return to Europe.

In the closing months of 1918, therefore, everything pointed to a consolidation of the forces of the Russian counter-revolution.

Not only were the moderate "democratic" elements being swept out of the way, but there was a definite move in the direction of uniting the forces of the defeated Prussian militarists, which still remained in the East, and those of the victorious Entente against Soviet Russia. It is true the Allies did not dare to admit openly that they were ready to use Germans in the task they had now set before them. But it is a fact that the French commander, General Anselm, who arrived in Odessa soon after the armistice with the Central Powers, proceeded to enter into relations with all anti-Bolshevik parties that he found there. Among them was the "gromada," a pro-German group, which had been formed during the German occupation. Through this group General Anselm arranged that the German troops in the Ukraine should hold the front against the Red Army, until other forces, either Allied or local Russian Whites, could be formed to take it over.¹ That the Allies were at this time using the armed forces of the Central Powers against the Red Army is also proved by the instructions issued to the British naval forces in the Baltic. The German soldiers in the East were war-weary and wanted to go home, and they pressed the officials of their soldiers' councils in this sense. The British officials, however, who arrived in the Baltic, prevented the German soldiers from laying down their arms. What happened is explained by August Winnig, the Majority Socialist, who had been appointed Political Commissioner for the Baltic by the new German Government. He described the course of the negotiations which he carried on for the purpose of accelerating the return of the German soldiers to their homes, in a letter to the *Vorwaerts* on September 6th, 1919. The following passage is worthy of study: "A British Naval Force arrived on the Dvina near Riga on December 21st. On the 23rd the British commander sent an ordnance officer to me and requested me to come to his commanding officer for a conference, which took place on the same day on board a British auxiliary cruiser. Here he declared to me that, according to the terms of the armistice, we were bound to remain in these territories, as long as it was demanded of us. He forbade me to send home any more troops or army stores. I declared to him, however, that it was quite impossible for me to stop the return of our soldiers, for this would mean at once a mutiny and an even greater chaos in the Baltic territories."

¹ See the *Denikin Documents*, published Moscow 1919, Commissariat for Foreign Affairs: Report of the A.B.C. ("National Centre") with the Staff of Denikin to Admiral Koltchak, dated February 23, 1919.

In South-East Russia the Allies appear to have gone even further. Allied commanders of small naval and military detachments, which arrived there from the Turkish war theatre in November, concluded a sort of joint agreement with the local German commander. On November 16th the *Neue Nachrichten*, organ of the German forces of occupation in the Ukraine at Berdiansk, printed a manifesto of the Allied command in South Russia.* It ran as follows: "We inform hereby the inhabitants of Odessa and the neighbourhood that we have arrived on Russian territory with the object of restoring order and of freeing the country from the Bolshevik usurpers. Both the Germans and ourselves have come here not as conquerors, but as champions of right. Hence their objects and ours are identical. . . . All unhealthy elements of Russia—that is the Bolsheviks and their adherents—are hereby placed outside the law. Persons harbouring them will be handed over to court-martial. We do not recognize any organization except those which are fighting them—the Volunteer and Cossack Armies, as well as the troops of the Constituent Assembly. Hence all organizations which are in possession of arms are ordered to deliver them to the specially appointed representatives of the international army section." The appearance of this document in the German and South Russian press and in the wireless telegrams received by the Moscow station, all at approximately the same date, leaves no doubt as to its authenticity. The German military authorities would not have printed it in the Berdiansk *Neue Nachrichten* under the nose of the Allies, if it had not been true, and no one could have sent out that radio from South Russia but the Allied commanders themselves.

The position then was clear. Under cover of the united bayonets of the Allies and the Central Powers, no longer at war, the Russian White Armies were to be mobilized and sent marching on Moscow. This was the next trial which the Soviet Republic was to experience. The World War had ended in the victory of one capitalist coalition over the other. The process of the amalgamation of finance-capital into one great international camp was beginning. The rulers of the Central Powers, fallen from their position as aspirers to world power, were now to play the rôle of assistant to the Allies in clearing the East from Bolshevism and in securing the payment of the blood money, lent to the Tsar by the French *petit bourgeoisie*. New constellations

* This manifesto was sent out by radio on November 20th, and I saw a copy of it in Moscow a few days later. It was also reprinted in the *Vorwaerts* for December 6th and in the *Manchester Guardian* for January 2nd.

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were appearing in the international firmament. The League of Nations was facing the Soviet Republics, latent or in being. Moscow was pitted against Paris—Lenin against Wilson. That was the result of the break-up of the Central Powers coalition and of the so-called German Revolution of November 1918.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1919 IN EASTERN EUROPE

ON December 1st I left Russia for Germany, and my direct observations of the internal developments of the Soviet Republic came to an end. A grave situation had been created for the Republic by the closing, after the German Revolution, of all avenues of contact with the outer world. Even the Governments of the neutral countries had been forced by the pressure of the Entente to expel the Soviet diplomatic representatives. For the Entente rulers thought that the time had indeed come. Freed now from the competition of German Imperialism, they expected to be able to dictate a settlement in Eastern Europe and secure the payment of the Tsarist loans. The ring round Soviet Russia, that blockade of truth, was tightening every day. The conspiracy of silence was deepening.

About the middle of November I learned that the German Independent Socialist, Haase, who was in charge of the Berlin Foreign Office, had given an interview to an American journalist. As the Prussian officers, who controlled the German Soldiers' Councils in the Baltic provinces, refused to allow any Russian to pass into Germany, I resolved to make use of my British passport, and of the fact that Germany had just signed an armistice with the Allies, to get through the German lines and come to Berlin, whence I thought I could communicate a true account of the situation in Russia to friends in England. I therefore felt it my duty to make this attempt, and I set out from Moscow on December 1st. In five days I reached the German lines. After some delay the German official who controlled the Soldiers' Council let me pass, and I reached Berlin on December 7th. In East Prussia, however, I was relieved of the greater part of the papers which I had brought with me, amongst others of a part of the archives collected by me during my four years' stay in Russia, and much valuable material on the Russian Revolution.

To make matters still more difficult for me, the German

Workmen's Councils, even in the big industrial centres, soon showed they were unable to withstand the rapidly mobilizing forces of the old regime in Prussia. These forces, after a few weeks of inactivity, caused by the demoralization and defeat in the West, soon set about reversing, under the auspices of Majority Socialists, all that had been won in November. A Coalition Government was formed in Berlin, and under the cloak of the National Assembly, the Prussian military caste proceeded to rule with martial law and wholesale shootings of Socialists and Communists. The inexperienced leaders of the Spartacist Party were unequal to the difficult situation, and frittered away their strength in futile outbursts. The January rising in Berlin, largely the work of agents of the Prussian Secret Service, was speedily crushed, and "Socialist Noske" ruled with a rod of iron, as right-hand man of Ludendorff behind the scenes.

The restoration in Germany closed the last avenue by which the Soviet Republic's leaders had hoped to establish contact with the outer world. Worse than that, Ludendorff's plan of getting a place in the Wilsonian League of Nations, by offering the German sword for the crushing of Russia, came next on the order of the day. In Poland also, where the Russian Communists were speculating on a social revolution, the national and social chauvinist elements gained the upper hand and the Government of Paderewsky aspired to become the "gendarme of the East," to exact the tribute of the Tsar's loans for the Paris banks. Haller's army became part of Foch's military system for the domination of Europe in the interest of French creditors.

The increasingly threatening international situation compelled the Soviets to take corresponding measures. From the first days of 1919 the military preparations for raising the Red Army to 1½ million men were feverishly pushed on. Increasing numbers of workmen were called to the colours. A Supreme Revolutionary Council of Defence was formed. The chairman was the War Commissar, Trotsky. Specialists also sat on the Council, together with the political Commissars and confidential men appointed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The plan was thought out and gradually realized of uniting all the fronts of the Red Army, which extended now over 7,500 miles, under one supreme command. The Cadet schools also continued to turn out working-class commanders, who began gradually to replace officers of the old army.

The strategical situation in the New Year was for the moment not unfavourable to the Red Army commanders. The Allies

required some time to make their preparations for the attack on Soviet Russia, and they had, moreover, one disadvantage—that they had to work from outer lines and unite White forces, separated by thousands of miles. The Red forces, on the other hand, could work from a centre outwards, like the German Supreme Command in the first stages of the World War. They were assisted, too, by popular revolutions in the Ukraine, on the Don and in the Baltic states. The defeat of German Imperialism and the rush of the German soldiers to their homes let loose all the suppressed forces of revolt in these territories. Particularly in the Ukraine did the revolutionary peasant masses, who had suffered so long under the iron heel of General Skoropadsky and of the Great Russian and Polish landlords backed by the Prussian generals, rise like one man. Although the Red troops on the north Ukrainian front only numbered a few thousand, nevertheless they, with armed Ukrainian peasants, resembling the *Jacquerie* of the French Revolution, succeeded in driving the Germans out of the whole of the territories in the Eastern Ukraine within a few weeks. The Second Ukrainian Soviet Republic was then proclaimed in Kharkoff. This Republic began its existence under much more favourable circumstances than the one established by the Red Guards in Kieff during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. In those days Trotsky wanted a Ukrainian Soviet regime, as a diplomatic card to play against General Hoffmann and the Rada in the game of "self-determining" the Russian border states. In those days the Ukrainian Rada enjoyed some popularity, and the Reds of North Russia were simply intruders. Now, however, the treachery of the Rada had met its due reward, and the peasants, who had learned in the school of Skoropadsky the meaning of "self-determination," as interpreted by the Polish and Russian landlords, were ready to try the other interpretation. The new Ukrainian revolution took a more definitely social form, for the "nationalist" slogans had become discredited. A somewhat similar situation was created on the Don. The pro-German General Krasnoff had fled with Skoropadsky to Germany. Small forces of Red troops, joined with Red elements among the Cossacks, took Novo-Tcherkask for the second time and set up the "autonomous Soviet Republic of the Don Cossacks." The Volunteer Army of General Denikin, the successor of General Alexeieff, who had died in the closing days of 1918, was confined to a small strip of land in the North-West Caucasian steppes. In Lithuania, Lettland and Esthonia popular risings of workmen and peasants took place, and revolutionary Lettish regiments, which had

been among the most reliable units of the Red Army in the terrible days of August 1918, hastened to their homes to create little Soviet Republics federated to Moscow. After the many months of suppression under the heel of Tsarist reaction, in alliance with Prussian militarism, the ideas of Moscow seemed, even to the peasant proprietors and intellectuals of these small nations, the lesser of two evils.

These favourable circumstances on the western and southern peripheries of Soviet Russia encouraged those among the Russian Communists' foreign experts who cherished hopes of uniting the revolutionary movements of Eastern Europe with those of Central Europe. They had not given up hope of the German Revolution, as Radek's speech at the Congress of the German Spartacists in Berlin on January 1, 1919, clearly showed, when he talked of German comrades fighting Koltchak on the Urals and Russian comrades fighting Allied Imperialism on the Rhine. In the Supreme Revolutionary Council of Defence a "western school" of strategy began to make its influence felt. Trotsky's chief military adviser was Vatsetis, former colonel in the Tsar's army and a Lett. He had come to sympathize with the Communists, at first passively, later actively, and his Lettish origin caused him to ask himself how the Red Army could best assist the social revolution in the Baltic provinces and clear out of these territories the influence both of Allied and of German Imperialism. This outlook coincided with that of the German Spartacists, and of that school in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in Moscow who wanted at all costs to get a "Red bridge" through the Baltic provinces to connect Soviet Russia with the revolutionary forces in Germany. The Spartacist rising in Berlin had been crushed, but there was the Kurt Eisner regime in Munich all through February and March, which developed during April into a full-fledged Soviet Republic.

The hopes of the Russian Communists for the world revolution rose high in these days, for the early months of 1919 resembled in no small degree the exciting days during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, when the general strike had broken out in Berlin and Vienna and a Red Government was proclaimed in Finland. Most important of all was the second revolution in Hungary, when Count Karolyi handed over the reins of government in Budapest to Bela Kun. With Rakovsky at the head of the Second Ukrainian Soviet Republic, only a narrow strip of White territory lay between his government on the shores of the Dniester and Bela Kun's on the slopes of the Carpathians. And the Western school on the Supreme Revolutionary Council

of Defence in the Ukraine were at pains to push the advanced posts of the Red Army as far forward as possible into Galicia, in the hopes of getting in touch with the Hungarian Reds. In doing this, however, they failed to protect their left flank in the south-east against Denikin, who was receiving the balance of the Allies' war stores in Salonika. This created some difference of opinion in Moscow, for another school was forming under Lenin's influence, which favoured the strategy of finishing with the enemy at the gates before assuming an offensive in Europe. The influence of Rakovsky, however, prevailed in these months. This exceedingly able Balkan revolutionary had his eyes on Bucharest, Sofia and Belgrade all the time, and dreamed of joining hands with the revolutionary peasants in Roumania, Bulgaria and Serbia. Altogether, these months were times of revolutionary offensive, not unmixed perhaps with a touch of adventure and romance. Had not the Miners' Federation of Great Britain given an ultimatum to Lloyd George, demanding nationalization of the coalmines or 50 per cent. of the representation on the Coal Commission? Had not British "Tommies" demonstrated for demobilization? and had not something of the nature of a Soviet been formed at Belfast?

But all these symptoms appear to have been those of a sick-headache—perhaps a sharp attack of intermittent fever—in the capitalist system of Western and Central Europe. The rulers of England knew how to deal with the indisposition by administering a strong dose of chauvinist, anti-German propaganda from the Versailles laboratory. The "German-Bolshevik conspiracy" was trotted out again, and the Allied workers fell back into apathy. In Germany, too, the Munich Soviet was speedily suppressed and the "Noske Terror" began to rage. Haller's Polish legions passed across Germany to Poland, where the country, already deprived of its industrial proletariat by four years of war and German deportations, was entirely in the hands of the chauvinist intellectuals and social imperialists of the Pilsudsky type. Moreover, the Entente now seriously took the Baltic provinces in hand. Both England and France were vitally interested in preventing these territories from becoming a "Red bridge" between Russia and Germany. The project of the *cordon sanitaire* was launched. The British navy bombarded the Red positions on the coasts of Esthonia and convoyed supplies to a White Army of Russian Tsarist officers and Esthonian White volunteers. The Soviet Republics of Esthonia and Lettland were never very strong, because of the large peasant proprietor and strongly nationalist intellectual elements in the country.

The latter gave the White troops their support, and the Red Army, which had never numbered in these districts more than 10,000 poorly equipped men, retired in haste to the frontiers of Muscovy. The Polish legions, in the meantime, drove the Reds out of Lithuania and annexed it to the "Greater Poland," which was part of the French scheme for the domination of Europe.

Then followed the "Prinkipo proposal," which was little more than an episode amid the greater events of these times. It deserves, however, to be recorded as a proof of differences which had already begun to appear in the camp of the Entente as to the tactics in fighting Bolshevism. The French and the Russian Whites would hear nothing of a joint conference of Bolsheviks and anti-Bolsheviks to settle their quarrel, because they knew that the Bolsheviks would not agree to the one condition for the success of the conference, namely, the unconditional capitulation of the Soviet Republic. Lloyd George had another scheme for fighting Bolshevism. He wanted another Brest-Litovsk, in the hopes that peace, under conditions which would have left large raw material supplies in the hands of Denikin and Koltchak, would make the existence of the Soviet Government impossible. He was convinced that it had spent its energies, as witness his speeches at this time describing the Russian Revolution as a fire which had burnt itself out everywhere except on the periphery. But the French view prevailed. Churchill and Foch continued their plans for reinforcing and equipping the White Armies of Yudenitch, Denikin and Koltchak for a grand offensive on Moscow during the course of the summer.

The Allied Governments, however, found that they could not, as they had originally intended, use their own armies, which were now freed from the war with the Central Powers, in the attack on Soviet Russia. Labour opinion in England, though still far from energetic, was sufficiently restive to prevent an open declaration of war. It was therefore decided to utilize the Allied forces which had already been sent to Russia under the plea of "fighting the Bolshevik-German alliance," to delay their return home, and under the cover of their bayonets to mobilize and equip large White Russian forces. Further, as the War Diary of the British Military Mission in Siberia shows,¹ Mr. Churchill used the reinforcements which had been sent to Archangel, on the plea of evacuating troops already there, for the purpose of organizing an offensive against the Red Army

¹ This was captured by the Red Armies and published in extracts by the *Daily Herald* during July 1920.

and of uniting with the Koltchak Whites. This plan was also revealed by General Ironside, in an incautious interview given to a local Russian paper at Archangel on June 1st, and by the Archangel correspondent of *The Times* in a despatch of July 25, 1919. Nevertheless, large Allied forces could not even so be used on account of the pressure of Labour opinion in England.

Moreover, as the "Denikin documents" show,¹ the "National Centre," which was the political brain of the Denikin and Koltchak White Armies, was now opposed to large Allied military forces being used in Russia. The following passage of the report, dated February 24, 1919, of the Cadet V. A. Maklakoff to the Russian White Embassy in Paris shows the point of view held in these quarters: "God forbid that Russia be conquered by foreign, though friendly, Powers with the aid of foreign blood. The liberation of Russia from the bandits who have her in their grip is only her work. With speedy and sufficient material support from the Allies, Russia will be able to produce the vital force necessary for organizing the army and freeing the country from Socialists. We shall be compelled to pay for the material aid we receive, during the period that we sacrifice our material strength, by the payment of the debt during the next decade. But that is all. For French and English blood, however, shed in and for Russia, we shall no doubt be compelled to pay with spheres of influence. They (the Allies) will treat Russia like Turkey, Persia and Egypt. Therefore I say, more tanks, guns and money; less Allied soldiers. I was at one time an ardent partisan of the Allies. I considered the restoration of the Eastern front, not only with the participation of the French and British, but also of the Japanese, as absolutely necessary. You know in conjunction with this question the Right Centre fell to pieces, and the National Centre arose with a pure Entente orientation, which took the standpoint of the struggle against Germany and the formation of the eastern front with the aid of the Allies. Since then, however, things have radically changed. There is now no war with Germany, and I think that these reasons, which have compelled us to require the armed assistance of the Allies, have disappeared. . . . It may be put to you that the Allies may refuse further support, not because we demand their soldiers, but because they do not want us any longer. 'Germany exists no more,' they may say; 'why should we feed the Bear, when there is no longer any use for it against Germany?' A heavy task may lie before us, to fight the Bolsheviks without the help of

¹ Published Com. Foreign Affairs, Moscow, 1920, and *Manchester Guardian*, January 21, 22 and 23, 1920.

the Allies, perhaps, indeed, against them. Nevertheless, Russia will remain. Germany also will remain. And what will happen when these two countries come to understand that they have been robbed, and when they demand to have back what has been stolen from them?"

The conditions under which Admiral Koltchak launched his offensive from Siberia towards Moscow were just the conditions laid down in Maklakoff's letter. Small Allied forces held the Siberian Railway and the White and Black Sea coasts. Picked White volunteer corps of Tsarist officers and emigrants formed the kernel of Koltchak's Siberian forces. Equipped with all the latest military technique, they advanced through the Urals, driving very inferior Red forces before them. Ufa and Perm were taken. The Whites approached Viatka and were already within a short distance of the British at Archangel. By the middle of May Koltchak's forces were marching down the Kama and threatened to cut the Volga at Samara and Kazan. The situation was becoming so serious that the Supreme Revolutionary Council of Defence was compelled to alter its whole strategy. The "Western School" could no longer carry its point of view. The revolutionary movement in Western and Central Europe was hanging fire, and meanwhile Koltchak's armies were threatening the very heart of the Soviet Republic. Heroic measures were needed. At a war council held early in May it was decided to abandon the pressure on the west front, give up all hopes of keeping open a "Red bridge" to Central Europe, and concentrate every available man and gun on the East. Trotsky's chief military adviser, Vatsetis, still held by his view that to withdraw everything from the West was dangerous and mistaken. He therefore resigned, and his place was taken by Kameneff, a former officer of the Tsar's army and instructor of the Military Academy at Petrograd. He drew up a bold and far-reaching plan against Koltchak, and this was put into effect towards the end of May. The Red Army was entirely regrouped. A general mobilization of factory hands was ordered in all industrial centres, and special Communist battalions were formed and sent to the most difficult and dangerous places at the front. Koltchak was driven from the Kama back on the Urals, where, in spite of his equipment from the Allies, his retreat became a rout.

But Koltchak's defeat was not only due to the new strategy of the Red Army command and the urgency measures taken in Moscow. It was in no small measure caused by the weakness of his own rear. He had no large Allied military force at his beck and call. The British and French forces in Siberia were

engaged in holding the lines of communication. His only reliable troops, which were available for the front, were the Officers' Volunteer Corps. But as the territory which he occupied expanded, he was compelled to have recourse to a general mobilization of the inhabitants. At once his army ceased to be a class army or a White Guard, and began to contain every kind of element, friendly and hostile to his regime. Moreover, when the nature of the restoration, which had been effected by the powers that stood behind him, began to be more widely known, and especially when the Siberian peasants, who had supported the Right S.R.'s, saw that all the conquests, even of the March Revolution, were being sacrificed, they quickly began to make use of their newly acquired arms for other purposes than those for which Koltchak had mobilized them. Thus during the critical days of his advance, just as the Reds were preparing their counterstroke, two of his newly formed regiments mutinied at Bele-Bei, murdered their officers and went over to the Bolsheviks. Rebellions broke out in his rear, whole districts, especially in the Yenesei provinces, rising in revolt. Koltchak was compelled now to fight for his life as much against the enemy in his rear as against the Red Army.

The Soviet Republic, however, was not freed from danger. The strategy of Kameneff, against which Vatsetis had protested, began to bear bitter fruits. The victory over Koltchak had exposed the whole of the western and southern fronts of the Republic. Denikin's Volunteer Army was not slow to profit by this and to make use of the transport difficulties which the Reds had to meet when moving their troops from one front to another. Before they could throw any considerable force from the East to the South, Denikin had started a big offensive from the Black Sea coast, had taken the whole of the Don coal basin, the Cossack territories and the Eastern Ukraine up to Kharkoff. He found some support from the rich farming class of the territory east of the Dnieper. The Second Ukrainian Soviet Government had not been wise in passing a Land Law, which in too many of its provisions resembled the Land Law of Muscovite Russia, where, in contradistinction to the Ukraine, the number of small proprietors was not large, and where the old rural commune still survived. Nor had the middle peasantry been sufficiently conciliated, as regards the position of their co-operative societies, and as regards the corn requisitions. The Anarchist band leaders, Machno, Angel and Gregorieff, who had put up such a stubborn fight against the German occupation, began to come out against the Second Ukrainian Soviet Republic, as

soon as the latter began to breathe the words, "order," "discipline" and "work." In so doing they unconsciously assisted Denikin's army of restoration, although in themselves they represented nothing more than the "Anarchist small proprietor" spirit in wide circles of the Ukrainian peasantry. It required another taste of a White restoration to bring these people to their senses again.

Denikin, who was now taking up the work of the defeated Koltchak, raised the war cry of the restoration—"A great Russia, one and indivisible." This caused considerable uneasiness, not only among the Ukrainian Nationalists, whom he mercilessly repressed, but also among the border States of the Baltic and Poland. Pilsudsky, who was to a great extent inspiring the foreign policy of the Paderewsky Government at this time, had been all his life a fanatical anti-Russian. He hated Russia, whether White or Red, and had always dreamed of an independent Poland, freed by the Central Powers and in close relations with Austria-Hungary. During the summer of 1919 the Polish Government, while advancing its Haller legionaries into White Russia, Lithuania, Galicia and the West Ukraine, remained neutral in the struggle between Denikin and the Red Army. Indeed, it was stated by Radek at a later date, that Pilsudsky had given him a private undertaking that the Polish forces should not intervene in the war in South Russia. There can be no doubt that one of the principal causes of this inactivity was the fear that a restored Tsarist Russia would not recognize the independence of Poland, since Denikin's "National Centre" would not give a satisfactory undertaking on this point.

If this was the Polish attitude, that of the Baltic States was similar, but more definite. Denikin and Koltchak were supported by the French Government, for whom it was advantageous to have a single great Russian Government, pledged to pay those 11 milliard gold roubles to the last kopeck. For the French bondholders the splitting up of Russia into a number of spheres of interest was not inviting. They claimed all Russia as their single sphere of influence. Only under these conditions was there any chance of the debts being paid. Under French pressure, therefore, Denikin refused to recognize the independence of Esthonia, Lithuania and Lettland, and only agreed to their autonomous rights under an All-Russian Government. On the other hand, the British Government, only interested up to 5 milliards in the Russian debt, was prepared to see its interest liquidated by a number of spheres of interest, where profitable concessions could be had. Inasmuch also as the Baltic States

provided excellent naval bases, it became doubly advantageous for the British Government to take the "independent" Baltic States under its protection. In this way the financial interests which stand behind the British Empire would get a double insurance. If the Denikin-Koltchak gamble failed, it would always be possible to leave France in the lurch and clear out, with a sort of protectorate over the Baltic States and the best agreement which might under the circumstances be made with the Soviet Government.

Needless to say, this difference in point of view within the Entente over the western territories of the former Russian Empire caused weakness, hesitation and delay in the anti-Bolshevik camp. This was made use of by a third party. I referred in the last chapter to the plan, which the Prussian generals under Ludendorff had formed after their defeat in the World War, to gain laurels by acting as the Entente's gendarmes in the East, and incidentally to revive the fallen prestige of Prussia's ruling class. The Entente military and naval authorities had given them their opportunity to realize this plan when they ordered the German soldiers in the occupied districts of the Baltic and Ukraine to hold the front against the Bolsheviks in the last months of 1918. When the German soldiers of the old army refused, after the revolution in Berlin, to stay at the front, the Allies permitted the German military authorities in the East to raise levies in Germany and to enlist them under the local Baltic Governments. In this way the famous Baltic divisions of the German *Reichswehr* came into existence. Under the stress of circumstances the Lettish Government gave these German volunteers the right to obtain land after the war with the Reds, on condition that they became Lettish citizens. The agreement was signed between Winnig (political Commissioner of the Berlin Government in the Baltic, December 1919) on behalf of the German Government, and by Ullman on behalf of the Lettish Government.*

This agreement had the approval of the British naval and military authorities in the Baltic. The command of these German troops was taken by General von der Goltz, the man who had suppressed the Red revolution in Finland. Goltz commanded not only the German volunteers, but also the Lettish troops under Colonel Ballod and a Russian officers' volunteer corps, which had been created at Pskoff and Vitebsk under the German army of occupation, before the latter had evacuated that part of Russia. This latter corps was under the command of Count Levien, a Russian Monarchist officer of

* See Winnig's article in the *Vorwaerts* for September 6, 1919.

pro-German tendencies. Ludendorff's plan had been to use it to march on Petrograd, but the victory of the Entente had forced him to agree to its inclusion in a so-called "North-West Army," in which were Lettish and pro-Ally elements. Nevertheless, von der Goltz retained the command of this army during the spring of 1919, and the British political and military authorities recognized his force as part of that which was to hold the anti-Bolshevik front.¹ At the same time, the Russian officer Colonel Avaloff-Bermondts was permitted to open recruiting agencies in Germany for volunteers for a special German corps, and Count Levien was to undertake the recruiting of Russians in the war prisoners' camps all over Germany for other Russian corps. These too were to come under the Levien-von der Goltz command. The head of the Denikin and Koltchak Military Mission in Paris, however, General Mankewitz, intervened now and required that the command of these heterogeneous anti-Bolshevik bands should be taken from von der Goltz and put under General Yudenitch, who was preparing a White force in Esthonia for an attack on Petrograd. Count Levien was ordered to bring his troops from Courland to Esthonia and to obey the commands of General Yudenitch. Colonel Bermondts was, however, left in Courland in command of a "Western Army" of his own German and Russian volunteers, whom he had recruited in Germany. Bermondts was temporarily recognized by the Allies as commander of these German-Russian troops, pending a new arrangement.

On August 26th a general offensive along the whole north-west and west anti-Bolshevik front against the Red Army was ordered from General Yudenitch's headquarters. The order for the advance was signed by General Marsh, the Chief of the British Military Mission at the Staff of General Yudenitch.²

¹ This is proved by information published in *Hinter der Kulissen der Russischen Konterrevolution*, by Rittmeister von Rosenberg, Prussian General Staff officer, published Berlin, as supplement to *Der Russische Korrespondenz*, June 1920. On page 8 the following passage is found: "The relations of Count Levien to the German military command at Libau (von der Goltz) did not prevent the British officials in Riga from having good relations with him."

² This order was reprinted in the Berlin *Zeitung am Mittag* for October 12, 1919, and ran as follows: "General offensive decided at Conference on August 26, 1919, after the settlement of political and military questions. Order concerns—(1) J. K. M. Laidonner, Commander Esthonian troops from Baltic coast to Jamburg-Gatchina railway; (2) General Desinoff's Russian troops from this railway to Velikaya; (3) P. N. Kainin's Lettish troops lying between Dvinsk and Velikaya; (4) Colonel Bermondts's troops, lying west and north-west of Dvinsk; (5) Colonel Balashefsky, commanding Lithuanian troops south-west of Dvinsk; (6) Captain Lyslofsky, commanding Polish troops on the right wing of No. 5."

It must have been known to General Marsh and to the British military authorities in the Baltic when this order was written, that Colonel Bermond's troops comprised large numbers of German recruits, and that most of his officers were officers of the Prussian Army. This did not hinder the launching of this offensive, but the lack of contact between the different wings of these mixed bands doomed it to failure. The Red line, weak as it was on the West, held. Shortly after this the British military authorities in London and Paris appear to have taken fright at the nature of the armed crowd which had been got together in the Baltic. The British Military Mission in Berlin, in particular, began to put difficulties in the way of the further recruiting of Germans for Colonel Bermond's corps and of Russian war prisoners from the camps in Germany. Bermond was ordered to hand over the command of his troops to General Yudenitch, after dismissing the German elements from among them, while von der Goltz, who remained all this time in the rear in Courland, was ordered to disband his forces and return to Germany.

The reason for this sudden change of policy was to be found in the difference of opinion which had in the meantime sprung up between the French and British Governments as to the future status of the Baltic States. As mentioned above, the French were out for a Great Russia, while the English were ready, for naval and financial reasons, to become protectors of Baltic spheres, within which were to nestle "independent Baltic States." The third element, the German recruits, whom the British had permitted to come into the anti-Bolshevik adventure in the closing days of 1918 with their Prussian generals, represented an element which favoured the French idea. Count Levien's pro-German Russians also were under the influence of the now rejuvenated "Right Centre," and stood for a united Tsarist Russia in friendly relations with Germany and for the suppression of all autonomous republics on the western periphery of Muscovy. Thus the French found supporters for their point of view on the Baltic settlement in the persons of their former deadly enemies, and the French press during the closing months of 1919, while continuing its chauvinist tone against the German Government in all matters concerning Central Europe, maintained a remarkable silence over the use of German troops on the anti-Bolshevik front in the Baltic States. Indeed, even after an Allied Military Commission had been sent, on the insistence of the British, to the Baltic to liquidate the whole of that front in December 1919, the French representative, General Niessel, continued to work for

the reconstruction of that front with the aid of German cannon fodder. The only condition which he insisted upon now was that all officers should be French and the staff of Bermond and Count Levien should be disbanded. Against this Baltic policy of the French militarists the British Government now began to take a firm stand. The Churchill influence was already on the wane, thanks to the muddle of the Archangel expedition, the defeat of Koltchak and the constant pressure of Labour opinion in England, which found expression in extraordinary Trade Union Congresses, at which vigorous language, not without threats, was used. Lloyd George's foxy nose had been sharp enough to scent the morning air, and soon General Gough was sent out to take charge over the head of General Marsh of the British Military Mission in the Baltic. Gough at once set himself vigorously in opposition to the war policy of General Niessel. He had indeed received definite instructions to liquidate the whole Baltic front and to pack off the German, White Russian, Polish and Lettish mercenaries bag and baggage to their homes. And the British view prevailed. The French militarists, with their Russian and German Monarchist braves, were compelled to face the alternative of liquidating the front or of carrying on the war alone with the Baltic dominated by a British fleet, on whose support in difficulties they could not reckon. The change of the British Government's attitude was not the result of any altruistic desire to assist the Soviet Republic in its military struggles. It was dictated, as indicated above, partly by a healthy fear of troubles at home, if the Churchill policy was continued, and partly by a good business instinct. After Koltchak's defeat Denikin's plunge north into Central Russia was generally regarded as a dangerous gamble. If he should be defeated, it was necessary to get on the winning side and get out with as little loss as quick as possible.

As a matter of fact, the Volunteer Army of Denikin, sweeping up from South Russia, had succeeded in reaching Orel, 200 miles from Moscow. With the aid of White cavalry detachments, he had broken through the Red lines and made destructive raids right into the central provinces of Russia. A grave hour had struck for the Soviet Republic, and every nerve had to be strained again, as in the fateful days of August 1918. The mobilization of all factory hands in the industrial centres was once more called for. Fifty per cent. of the employees of the Trade Unions and of the Soviet bureaux and the whole of the Communist Party was mobilized for the front. The Central Committee of the Communist Party also resolved on the most

daring step that had yet been taken since the Revolution. It threw open the ranks of the Communist Party to all persons who wished to join. Up till then it had been extremely difficult for anyone to enter the Party. Applicants had to show that they had taken part in Socialist work for so many years, and had to bring recommendations from old members. Even then they were not allowed into the Party at once, but had to serve a period of probation in the Party of "sympathizers with the Communist Party." Here they had to prove by work and sacrifice that they were fit to become full members. In this crisis, however, when Denikin was at the gates of Moscow, and when a membership card of the Communist Party was the best guarantee that the holder would find his way to the gallows, if Denikin took the city, the doors of the Party were thrown wide open. The result showed how deep were the roots which the Communist Revolution had struck in Russia. Within four days 20,000 new members were made in Moscow alone, and 100,000 in the provinces.¹ These extreme measures soon began to tell. Specially formed Red cavalry detachments soon began to do the same work in Denikin's rear as his White cavalry had done in the rear of the Reds. Furthermore, the same process of disruption overtook Denikin's Government in the districts he had occupied in South Russia as had overtaken Koltchak's Government in Siberia. As soon as he was compelled to mobilize a "national army," his class army of officers' corps and White Guards began to be swamped in a sea of discontented revolutionary peasants. The peasants rose against the landlords once more, when it was clear that the new regime would not recognize the land settlement which had been laid down by the Soviets in January 1918. The fall of Denikin was complete. For the third time, the Reds entered the Ukraine and the Don and set up the Soviet Republics of these regions.

At the close of 1919 a new "breathing space" had opened out for the Soviet Republic. The French financiers and militarists, sullen and beaten, were looking about for a new ally to subsidize. This time their choice fell upon Poland, who was to become the "gendarme of the East" for 1920. As these lines are being written the fate of this new phase of the struggle between the Russian workers and the Tsarist creditors in Paris is being decided on the battlefields of Poland and White Russia. In the meantime British finance interests in the East have found it con-

¹ The conditions for entering the Russian Communist Party have again been put back to those which existed before the crisis of October 1919.

venient to revert to the policy of double-insurance. Hence the presence of Maxim Litvinoff in Copenhagen and of Krassin and Kameneff in London.

Whatever the future may bring, one thing is certain. The French financiers cannot renounce their tribute on the Russian people without abandoning their military position in Europe and declaring the bankruptcy of their finances to their own workmen and peasants. Therefore they must go on hounding one adventurer after another against Soviet Russia, till one or other falls from exhaustion. With British finance interests the situation is different. They can afford to wait; they can afford to forego the 5 milliard gold roubles which they lent to Tsarism. They can liquidate these paper bonds in concessions obtainable from the "independent" border states of the Baltic and the Caucasus. They might even, under certain conditions, secure concessions for the exploitation of timber and the construction of railways in the northern parts of Soviet Russia. In the meantime, if France is unable to carry on the struggle and sinks exhausted, the new "breathing space" may bring internal difficulties to the Soviet Republic—difficulties which can no longer be tided over by the enthusiasm evoked by a revolutionary war. The pressure of the "middle peasantry" on the industrial proletariat which is becoming more and more exhausted and diminished in numbers as the struggle continues, may become a factor in favour of the British pretenders to the potential wealth of Russia. If the industrial proletariat of Central and Northern Russia is in the long run unable to restore and to considerably increase the productivity of the industry of the country, the ragged and unshod "middle peasants" of the backwoods may become potential allies of the British concessionaire. They may succeed in undermining the food monopolies of the Commissars, as indeed they nearly did in the summer of 1918. They may break the State control over foreign trade and paralyse the scientific system of production and Communist distribution, replacing these by a system of anarchical exchange of the products of East and West. Then the profits of the foreign concessionaires will have priority over the public needs, and the holders of those five milliards in Tsarist bonds may even yet come into their own. Then, indeed, will come the 9th of Thermidor of the Revolution.

But if, on the contrary, the process of dissolution sets in also in the capitalist world of the West, if the Red Armies continue to beat back the onslaughts of French adventurers, and the "middle peasantry" are kept sufficiently clothed and shod to

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prevent them from reaching out their hands for foreign opium, a new development is likely to take place. The sacrifices of the Red soldiers in the fields of Eastern Europe will have been indeed the travails in the birth of a new system of international exchange. The Tsarist loan papers, those emblems of an old economic order, will lie dusty in the Paris bank safes, and the anarchical system of profit and concession hunting for a privileged class will disappear. The interests of the masses, that toil by muscle and brain, will be the basis of the new system of economic exchange between East and West.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE GROWTH OF THE SOVIET IDEA

THE social revolution in Russia, the first signs of which were observed in March 1917, can roughly be traced to two dominating influences. The first was the influence of a certain school of thought among the Russian intellectuals; the second had its roots in the material condition of the masses. In order to understand the first, one must go back to the last decades of the last century, when the autocracy and the Russian agrarian aristocracy, though in the first stages of decay, were still powerful enough to inspire fear and call forth obedience. Before this time the thought of educated Russians, who had become aware of the degradation and apathy of the masses of their countrymen, tended to roam in the abstract. They sought relief in the romantic school of literature, in music, in art, and in mystic speculation. Pushkin, Borodin and Dostoieffsky represented each, in his special way, the yearning of the Russian intellectuals for an outlet for their faculties, suppressed and thwarted by a feudal oligarchy. Those who dared to enter the political sphere were attracted to the mystic Pan-Slavism of Homiakoff, to the barren self-criticism of the Nihilists, or to the crude mediæval Communism of the Narodniks. Only a few resorted to active struggle against Tsarism, like the early S.R.'s and their Terrorist associates. These had a mystical faith in the power of the personality on history and a superstitious dread of mass movements based on crude material instinct.

But in the 90's of last century a change came. The factory system with the influx of capital from the West began to spread over North Russia, and with it came the modern industrial proletariat. There arose among the intellectuals a new school of thought, which crystallized in working men's clubs and Socialist periodicals. Voices were now heard advocating the class struggle and the raising of the masses from their degradation by their own efforts. The Marxian ideas of economic evolution, the syndicalist ideas of mass action and the reformist

ideas of parliamentary government spread rapidly, and gave rise to numerous political societies. From this day forth the guiding spirit of the struggle for freedom in Russia was the Russian Social Democratic Workmen's Party. Numerically less important than the great Socialist Revolutionary (S.R.) Party, to which the peasantry flocked, it soon gathered round it under the auspices of Plekhanoff the advanced guard of the revolutionary masses in the towns, who were beginning to feel their strength and to realize that salvation could only come from themselves. It became the centre of the Marxian school of thought, and in spite of differences within its ranks on questions of tactics, retained till the November Revolution its unity of organization.

But the Marxian school among the Russian intellectuals was only the outcome of developments in other social layers. It did not make, it only guided, the Revolution. Without the mass movement from below, it would have become like a stream wasting in a sandy desert. Here we come to the second of the great influences on the events of the last three years in Russia—the influence of the material environment in which the Russian masses found themselves on the eve of the great Revolution. I have described in Chapter VI how the relics of an agrarian feudalism, which had not been swept away by the middle-class revolutions in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, weighed up till the summer of 1917, when they were forcibly removed from below, most heavily upon the Russian peasants. I have shown in Chapter IX how the war between the Entente and the Central Powers for the raw materials and man-power of the undeveloped places of the earth threatened in the highest degree the independence of Russia; how the bulk of the Russian industries were mortgaged to foreign banks, and how it was a matter of life and death for the industrial proletariat to save itself from slavery under one or other of the competing capitalist alliances. I have shown in Chapter XII how the struggle for peace was not a sentimental pacifist desire, but the result of an urgent necessity for the Russian proletariat to free itself from its slave-drivers. In subsequent chapters I have shown how after the defeat of the Central Powers the tendency became stronger for the capitalists and bondholders of all lands to unite for the purpose of effecting some form of restoration in Russia. It remains to add here that this pressure of the world bondholders on the Russian proletariat was the most influential factor in the creation of the revolutionary mass psychology in Russia. And when this pressure of the bondholders was added to the resent-

ment of the peasantry against the relics of feudalism in Central Russia and against the agrarian privileges of communities specially favoured by the Tsar's regime in the Asiatic provinces, a gigantic flood of revolutionary energy was created, which burst all bounds in November 1917.

In the chapters of this book dealing with the period between the March and the November Revolutions I have shown how the first impulse of the masses was manifested in the creation of industrial councils, which sprang up spontaneously and anarchically all over the vast territories of Russia and were called Soviets. The mere fact that no one summoned them showed that they were the outcome of a movement from below. In the industrial centres they took the form of factory councils and shop committees; in the army, of soldiers' councils; and in the villages, of primitive communes such as had survived from early times. As soon as this stage was reached, a difference of opinion was disclosed in the ranks of the revolutionary intellectuals of the Russian Social Democratic Workmen's Party. The Menshevik wing held strictly to the reformist view of the class struggle. As the reader will have seen in reading the speeches of the Menshevik leaders at the First Soviet Congress in June 1917 (see Chapter III), their view of the class struggle was modified by the Utopian idea of a period of co-operation between the working and middle classes, prior to the assumption of power through political means by the former. The same process was foreshadowed for Russia as that which the British working classes passed through after the break-up of the Chartist movement. But the material conditions under which the class struggle was developing during the summer of 1917 soon showed that these tactics could not possibly free the Russian proletariat and peasants from the fate awaiting them. The Bolshevik wing of the Party interpreted the significance of the mass movement of the summer of 1917 with much greater skill. It renounced all co-operation with the middle-class parties, and only used their institutions and platforms, as a means for fighting them. It insisted that in the period before the fall of the capitalist state, not only the political, but also the industrial weapon should be used by the masses. The contest between these two points of view was fought out round the Coalition Governments in the Kerensky period of the Revolution. The march of events showed the Bolsheviks to have been right. Coalition with the middle classes meant for Russia war, the dictatorship of Korniloff in the army and of the landlords in the villages. Thus the Mensheviks were discredited, and the Coalition fell. From

this time forth the Bolsheviks became the intellectual leaders of the mass movement.

As soon as this phase of the Revolution came, a new struggle commenced. The masses had covered Russia with councils based on occupation and industry. These Soviets were the organs of the class struggle, and their rôle in the period before the fall of capitalism had been purely destructive. The Bolsheviks soon realized that the Soviets must become the organs of construction during the proletarian dictatorship. But as soon as they commenced this task, they found that only a small section of the population had the will for constructive work and discipline. The vast distances in Russia, and the ignorance in which the old regime had kept the bulk of the peasantry, were not conducive to a centralized form of government. Indeed, suspicion of all governments has always been widespread and deep-seated in the minds of the Russian masses. A struggle soon commenced between the Bolshevik disciplinarians and intellectual Anarchist elements, supported by the small village proprietors and the food speculators, who gathered round the Left wing of the old Socialist Revolutionary Party. During 1918 the proletarian dictatorship came gradually to rest upon a minority of the population—the most intelligent, conscious and disciplined section of it. The other elements began to back out as soon as the struggle for revolutionary organization and discipline became urgent. Thus the Communists started on their task of reconstruction almost alone.

Now the Soviets were of two kinds. Both of them were chosen from the basis of the shop, factory, craft union and village commune, and both had the same electorates. One, however, concerned itself solely with political affairs, viz. the organization of Red Guards, the fight with the counter-revolution and foreign relations. The other was concerned with economic affairs, viz. the control of the factories, the supply of raw material and the cultivation of the landlords' demesnes. The political Soviets were the first to acquire a powerful organization, and in the first months of the November Revolution, by a series of Congresses and Conventions, centred their apparatus first at the Smolny in Petrograd, and later in Moscow. The executive organs of this political authority were the Commissariats with their Commissars. The latter were liable to recall at any moment, and thus legislative and administrative functions tended to merge. The economic Soviets, on the other hand, only began to organize for constructive work early in January 1918, when, as described in Chapter XIV, the Supreme Council of Public

Economy, at the instigation of the political Soviets, held its first sitting. Gradually the anarchically formed shop committees and factory councils began to group themselves into industries according to geographical areas. The original local economic Soviets began to disappear and became merged into great trade unions and professional alliances, in which all traces of craft organization were speedily obliterated.

But the process of centralizing the proletarian economic Soviets in great industrial unions and in the Council of Public Economy was only the first step. It was necessary to attract also the technicians and specialists, who had hitherto been loyal to the capitalists, but whose assistance was essential for the construction of a co-operative community. The first six months of the proletarian dictatorship were largely taken up with the struggle against the sabotage practised by the technical staffs, who could not at once overcome their prejudice against working for proletarian masters. The task of breaking this sabotage was largely left to the political Soviets. After it had been broken, the professional alliances began to divide up their organization into two branches. A so-called "workers' section" assumed control over matters concerning the rates of labour remuneration, the hours of labour, factory food supply, inspection and workers' education, while a so-called "industrial organization section" acquired sole control over the business side of industry, the supply of raw material and the amount of production required. These last bodies were subsequently called "Glavs" (i.e. heads) and took the name of their industry—"Glav-textile" (head of the textiles), "Glav-ugol" (head of the coal), etc. They became departments of the Supreme Council of Public Economy, and on their boards technicians and specialists, appointed by the Supreme Council, sat along with members of the "workers' sections." Thus the Supreme Council of Public Economy became the economic nerve centre of the Republic. Its bureaux sprang up all over the country during 1918 alongside of those of the Commissariats of the political Soviets.

The most important step in the direction of creating this great combination of political and economic Soviets was taken by the first Congress of the Councils of Public Economy in May 1918, described in Chapter XVIII. As the result of the work done at this Congress, the gigantic bureaucracy of the Russian Revolution came into being. The Allied intervention and the war with the international counter-revolution did not stop this work. On the contrary, it accelerated it, but it gave the preponderating influence in the bureaucracy to the political Soviets

and to the Commissars, who, under the plea of military necessity, were largely able to dominate policy. Nevertheless, this Red bureaucracy was very different from the bureaucracy of a capitalist country. It was not controlled by a ruling class in the interest of private profit. It was and is controlled by the industrially organized proletariat in town and country, together with the technicians, specialists and political Commissars (the nearest approach to a ruling caste) in the interests of society. Anarchist intellectuals and "liberty lovers" in Western Europe would do well to bear this in mind.¹

It would be a mistake to imagine that the Russian Communists, in organizing this great industrial producing apparatus, were acting under the influence of the French syndicalist school, or of the ideas of Proudhon and others, who renounce political action and advocate the creation of artificial producers' and consumers' syndicates. The Russian Communists fought against this theory from the first. Under Tsarism they used the political platform of the Dumas; under Kerensky they agitated for the Constituent Assembly. After the November Revolution, when the Russian proletariat was faced with the task of reconstruction, they insisted on the necessity of having political Soviets alongside of the economic Soviets. The latter without the former, they said, were like a body without life.² Moreover, the Russian Communists were from the first the most determined opponents of the anarchist elements, who in the months immediately following the November Revolution proclaimed in factory councils and economic Soviets the "independence and freedom" of each branch of industry. The above facts prove that the Russian Communists had nothing in common with the Syndicalists. On the contrary, they concentrated their main attention upon the political Soviets. Under Kerensky they sent their delegates to capture these bodies. Later, when it became necessary to set up a great economic machine, they still retained the political Soviets to control the industrial apparatus centralized in the Council of Public Economy and in its "Glavs."

Further than this, the political Soviets gradually came under the influence of the party organizations till they were finally almost absorbed by the latter. This was accelerated by the

¹ For assistance in understanding the growth of the Soviet apparatus see diagram at end of book.

² This accounts for the criticism by the Third International of industrial councils movements, like those initiated in Germany by the *Kommunistische Arbeiter Partei* and by some of the left wing Independents and of the Socialist Labour Party and *Workers' Dreadnought* group in England, who, unconsciously following Proudhon, concentrate solely on the economic organization of the period of the proletarian dictatorship.

pressure of the Revolutionary War, which forced the advanced section of the urban proletariat to expel anarchist elements from the Soviet organs. The climax of this movement was reached in July 1918, when the Bolsheviks suppressed the Left S.R.'s, as described in Chapter XX. After this the Congresses of the Communist Party became almost more important than the Soviet Congresses themselves. And because the Communist Party showed itself capable of combining political agitation with economic organization, because it was far-sighted enough to see that a social revolution means not only the destruction of an old, but the construction of a new social system, because it was not afraid to use physical force to back moral conviction, therefore it gradually became the dominating factor in the Revolution, and waverers and uncertain elements followed its lead. The feature which has distinguished the Russian Communist Party from all other parties in the Russian Revolution has been, not so much its theories on the co-operative community of the future, as the tactics which it has used to realize them. In its insistence on a strong centralized bureaucracy and on a period of State Capitalism in industry, the Russian Communist Party has advocated nothing new. In this respect it has something in common with the English Fabians. Where it differs from all other Socialist parties and schools of thought is in the fact that it is the only party as yet which has in practice shown how the working classes in certain situations, such as that of Russia in 1917, can, through proletarian industrial councils, acquire and hold political power, and thus prepare the ground for a transition into a co-operative form of society.

The dominating influence of the Communist Party on the Revolution was made very plain early in 1919. At the Eighth Congress of the Party, which met in March of that year, a series of very important resolutions were passed. The restoration of the old regime in the territories occupied by Denikin and Koltchak created a situation favourable to *rapprochement* between the "middle peasants" and the urban proletariat in Central Russia. This was a factor of the utmost importance for fighting famine. The Congress passed a resolution containing the following passage: "The Communist Party declares that it is contrary to the principles of the Revolution to regard the 'middle peasants' as 'kulaks.' Our party comrades in the political Soviets are hereby ordered to co-operate in every way possible with the 'middle peasantry.' . . . Commissars of the Soviets must be made strictly responsible for all acts of violence against the 'middle peasantry,' who are not exploiters, but

small producers. All irresponsible requisitions must be stopped. The Party demands the strictest control of the local representatives of the Commissariats. . . . All direct taxes in money or kind must be drawn up with the greatest care, and the consumers' co-operative organizations of the 'middle peasantry' must be supported. . . . The Committees of the Poorer Peasantry must receive members of the 'middle peasantry' in their midst." The influence of the Communist Party organization was such that this resolution had immediate effect, and on March 20th the All-Russian Central Soviet Executive issued a decree, whereby the rural co-operative societies, which were for the most part in the hands of the "middle peasantry," were to be regarded as the public distributing apparatus in the villages. These were to be linked up with the consumers' co-operatives in the towns, and the whole was to elect three members on the Supreme Council of Public Economy, which was to have from this time forth a special "consumers' distributing department." The only conditions imposed upon the co-operative societies were that they should exclude from the right of election to their management all persons who were not eligible to elect or be elected on the economic and political Soviets under the Constitution of the Republic.

Thus by the action of the Communist Party an entirely new departure in policy was made early in 1919. Not only were the "middle peasantry" organizations brought into the Soviet system, but for the first time a Soviet distributing apparatus was created. Until that time the weakness of the economic organizations of the Soviets had been that they only took account of the masses as producers. This defect was remedied by the creation of a consumers' department on the Supreme Council of Public Economy. Immense possibilities were thus opened out before this great body. As Trotsky showed in his speech at the Third Congress of Economic Councils in the spring of 1920, a time would come when the political Soviets, and even the Communist Party itself, would pass away, when the period of the dictatorship would be over, and the exploiting class suppressed and absorbed in the hand and brain-working classes. Then the whole creative force of the new society would be concentrated in its Supreme Council of Public Economy, where parties, no longer political, but industrial, would contend on the issues of the day. How similar are the ideas expressed in Trotsky's speech to those of Robert Owen, in the days when he was trying to organize his co-operative commonwealth in England! Yet how far apart was the Utopianism of those early

reformers, who believed in converting the capitalist, from the realism of the Communists of the twentieth century?

Another illustration of the dominating influence of the Russian Communist Party on revolutionary policy in its later stages is to be seen in the agrarian programme of the Third Ukrainian Soviet Republic. In January 1920 the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued theses on the lines which the land settlement in the Ukraine ought to take. The disasters which had overtaken the previous Ukrainian Soviet Republics had taught their lesson, and it was decided not to invite a repetition of them by alienating the small peasant proprietors. One of the theses contained the following passage: "In view of the fact that the peasantry are the backbone of the population of the Ukraine, almost more so than in Great Russia, the Soviet Government of the Ukraine should endeavour to acquire the confidence of the 'middle peasantry.' The great landlords' estates, returned by Denikin to their owners, must be liquidated at once. But Communist economy on the land must only be set up in cases of absolute necessity, to prevent the lowering of production, and even so in co-operation with the peasantry. There must be no forcible organization of the peasants into co-operative communes." This was followed by a land law of the All-Ukrainian Congress of Political Soviets in February 1920, which embodied the principles of these theses.

Again, after the defeat of Denikin and Koltchak, when the question of demobilization and economic reconstruction was urgent, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, on January 23, 1920, issued another series of theses, which, accepting as a basis Section 2, Chapter V, Article 18 of the Russian Constitution, that "work is the obligation of every citizen of the republic," laid down the principle of "industrial conscription." In these theses it was pointed out that, even if the Western capitalist states were to give up their attempt to crush Russia, the latter had little hope of receiving economic assistance in the existing state of the world's industries, and that therefore the Russian Revolution must mobilize the whole of the population for its own needs. A great political discussion followed in the political and economic Soviets throughout the country. The local Councils of Public Economy and the provincial branches of the professional alliances criticized and made counter-proposals. Finally, Trotsky, at the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party in April 1920, produced a plan for demobilizing the Red Army and for converting it into a militia based on industrial regions. Each division, regiment and battalion of the

Red Army was to be converted into an organ of the Supreme Council of Public Economy, which was to set the task, while the apparatus of the War Commissariat and of the Commissariat of the Interior was to remain to register and mobilize the able-bodied population. Thus the place of the military specialist was to be taken by the industrial specialist, who would command each cadre of the "army on the bloodless front." And the Red Army, born in the travail of those terrible summer months of 1918, was to become the peaceful instrument of Communist reconstruction, and was to realize that proletarian discipline which was foreshadowed by the decisions of the First Congress of Public Economy.

This was the plan which Trotsky put forward, and again it fell to the lot of the Communist Party to carry it through the Soviets and to get its ideas spread over the country. Trotsky's speech at the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party contains the following significant passage: "The masses must be shown our economic plan of campaign, on the basis of which our party and the Soviet apparatus proposes to undertake this mobilization. We cannot wait till each peasant man and woman understands; we must compel each citizen to take his place. Here it comes about that besides the propaganda of our party, which has great historic value, its united will is of supreme moral importance. If after this Congress we contend among ourselves about the desirability and method of industrial conscription,* the collapse of our whole economic system will be at hand, for the 'middle peasantry' and the backward elements of the workers do not yet clearly understand the problem which lies before us. Therefore our united will is necessary, in order that they shall understand. On the stage of history many forms of society, of State authority and of political parties have come and gone. But the masses have seen only one party which knows full well what it wants, speaks with no uncertain voice, and acts with iron will to realize what it has set out for. The masses must be saturated through and through with the idea of the united will of our party. If we provide this idea, we shall have fulfilled our rôle in history."

In these words we can see where lie the well-springs of the stream that drives the wheel of the Soviet system. But the Communist Party did not carry its great programme for 1920. After two months of more or less successful experimenting with Labour Armies in the North Caucasus and Urals, the war tocsin

* There had been great difference of opinion within the ranks of the Communist Party on this point.

rang the alarm once more. The international counter-revolution, centred in Paris, decided that the Soviet Republic should have no rest. The Polish "gendarme of the East" was let loose, and the Labour Armies became once more the Red Armies in the field.

The work of building up a Communist commonwealth has been hindered from the first by the war waged on Russia by the forces of the European bondholders. For while on the one hand these attacks have united wavering elements with the Communists in the task of repelling the foreign invaders and have facilitated the task of centralizing the State apparatus, on the other hand they have had a paralyzing influence on the whole economic system. More than that, the war, by drawing manpower from works of production to works of destruction, encourages the parasitical instincts of the less enlightened section of the population. The factory workman, who cannot get sufficient rations on account of the drain of the army on the food supplies, is increasingly inclined to leave his work and go to hunt for food in the villages as a sack-carrier. The "middle peasant," however loyal he may now be to the Soviets, who protect him from Denikin's landlords and from the Polish "pans," can hardly resist the temptation of selling to the starving towns at speculative prices—an act which undermines the very existence of the Soviet Republic. And as long as the Council of Public Economy is engaged in mobilizing the industries of the country for war, so long will the "middle peasants" suffer dearth in all the necessities of life other than food, and so long will they continue to chase the phantom of the paper roubles, till finally they are worth less than the paper they are printed on. The revolutionary war, if continued long enough, must result in reducing Eastern Europe to a condition in which not merely a co-operative commonwealth, but civilized life under any system will become impossible.

It is true, great advances have been made in Communist economy since November 1917. In the autumn of 1918 the number of landlords' demesnes converted into Soviet State farms, together with agricultural labour communes, did not number more than 1,000 on an area of a little over 200,000 dessatines.¹ In May 1919 State farms and labour communes numbered 3,079 on an area of about 500,000 dessatines. In April 1920, however, the number of State farms was more than 2,000, and the area cultivated by these and the labour communes

¹ See p. 84, note.

was over 2,000,000 dessatines.¹ At the same time a steady increase was to be observed in the amount of corn stored by the Commissariat of Food from the commencement of the Revolution. Thus between August 1917 and August 1918 30,000,000 pouds were stored,² between August 1918 and August 1919 110,000,000 pouds, between August 1919 and June 1920, 175,000,000 pouds.

But in spite of this tendency to expansion in Communist economy, even in agriculture, the most backward of industries, further developments in this direction must be dependent upon the speed with which the war with the Western capitalist Powers and Poland is liquidated. Even then the difficulties will not be over, for a reaction against the discipline of war-time may increase the anarchistic tendencies of the "middle peasantry," when once the dangers of the foreign invasion are gone. And from the first, as I have shown in the above pages, one of the greatest enemies of Russian Communism has been the sub-conscious Anarchist psychology of large sections of the Russian intellectuals and of the Russian peasantry. Indeed, Lenin is said to have remarked on one occasion, when discussing with someone the prospects of Russia's example being followed in other countries: "In Russia it is easy for the proletariat to take power, but terribly hard to construct an ordered society. In Western Europe, on the other hand, it is terribly hard for the proletariat to take power, but very easy to construct an ordered society." The circumstances prepared by the industrial revolutions in Western Europe in the nineteenth century and by the Great War of 1914-1918, gave the Russian proletariat the opportunity to take power and to make the greatest social experiment in the history of mankind. How long it will be before the co-operative commonwealth will be fully realized in Russia no one can foretell. The beginning has been made, and one thing is certain: A return to the past in Russia is not only impossible, but the Soviet Republic, as long as it exists, will be a light to lighten the oppressed, the enslaved and the exploited in all lands and in all continents. In Western Europe the old civilizations, whose foundations were laid by the middle-class revolutions following the Reformation, will probably be the last to be affected by proletarian upheavals, and the course taken by social changes in the West must of necessity vary according to the traditions and institutions of the age-long cultures there. But

¹ These figures were published by the Commissariat of Agriculture and printed by the *Russische Korrespondenz*, Berlin, No. 2, February 1920.

² See p. 84, note.

as the Slavophil Professor Lamansky wrote in his posthumous work :¹ " Russia is the only country in the Eurasian continent whose culture is neither hostile to that of Europe nor to that of Asia." And the Titanic work of the Soviets, watched as yet only with sympathetic interest by the Western proletariat, is rousing a passionate longing in the hearts of the dusky and yellow millions that live to the east of Muscovy. Was not the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905-6 followed by national upheavals in Turkey, Persia and China? Is it not almost as certain as the rising of the sun that in the continent where middle-class revolutions have not yet penetrated, where the coolie and ryot still live under feudal agrarian castes backed by the navies, armies and finance of Western European capitalism, the example of Moscow will not pass unheeded? In the days to come the ruling classes who have Empires in the East may ponder over the lines of Thomas Carlyle on the French Revolution and apply them to the Soviet regime in Russia :

" This Republic and National Tigress is a New Birth ; a Fact of Nature among Formulas in an Age of Formulas . . . ; terrible in its sincerity, as very Death. Whatsoever is equally sincere may front it, and beard it ; but whatsoever is *not* ?— "

¹ *Dvuy Miry Evropeiskovo-Asiatskovo materika*, Petrograd, 1916.

APPENDIX

DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE WORKING AND EXPLOITED PEOPLES

(PASSED BY THE GREAT CONVENTION ON JANUARY 27, 1918)

I. RUSSIA is declared a Republic of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' councils. The whole central and local authority rests with the Councils (Soviets). The Russian Soviet Republic is declared a free alliance of free nations and a federation of national republics.

II. With the object of removing the exploitation of man by man, of preventing the division of society into classes, of mercilessly suppressing all exploiters, of establishing a socialist organization of society and of securing the victory of Socialism in all lands, the Great Convention (Third All-Russian Soviet Congress) makes the following declarations:

- (a) With the object of realizing the socialization of land, all private property in the land is abolished, and the whole territory of the Republic is declared the property of the people and is without compensation handed over to the working population on the basis of equal rights of utilization for all. All forests, natural wealth and water power of public value, all live and dead stock, model farms and agricultural stations are declared national property.
- (b) As a first step towards the complete transference of factories, mines, railways, and of the means of production and distribution to the possession of the Workers' and Peasants' Republic, the decrees concerning Workmen's Control and concerning the Supreme Council of Public Economy are hereby confirmed.
- (c) As one of the conditions for the emancipation of the working masses from the yoke of capitalism, the transference of all banks to the possession of the Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic is confirmed.
- (d) With the object of removing parasitical elements of society and of securing industrial organization on a public basis, the obligation of every citizen to work is recognized.

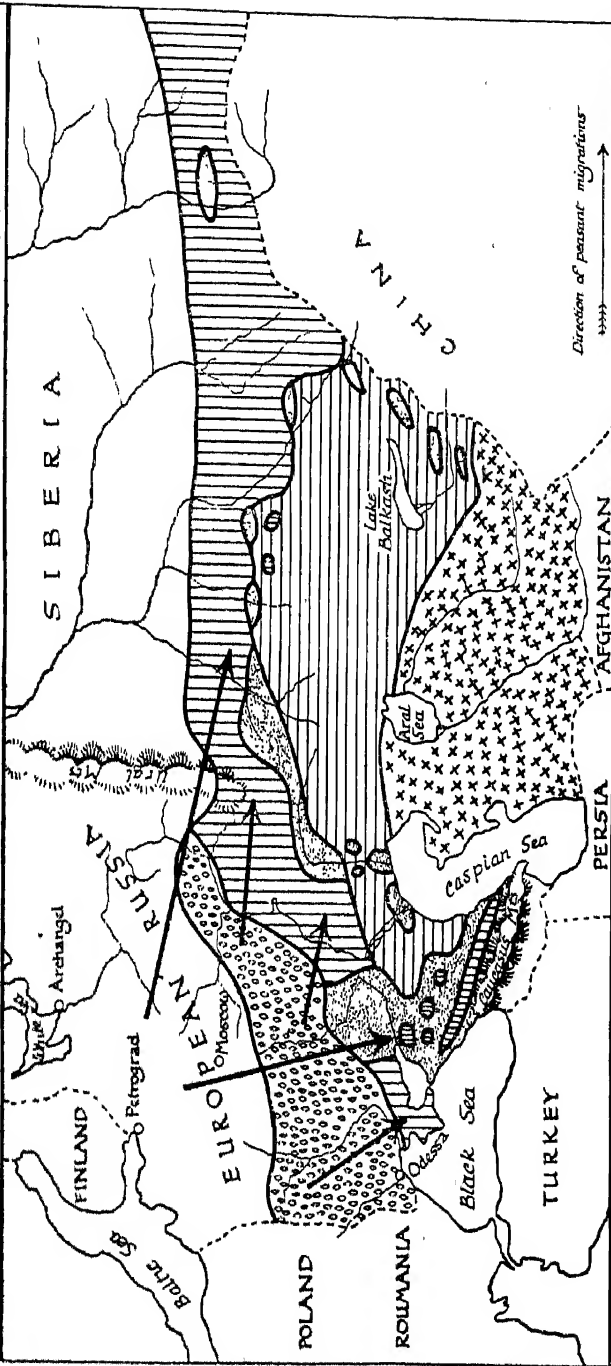
- (e) In the interests of securing the full authority of the toiling masses and of removing all possibilities of a re-establishment of the power of the exploiters, the arming of the workers, the formation of a Red Army out of workmen and peasants, and the complete disarming of the propertied classes is hereby decreed.

III. With the firm intention of rescuing mankind from the claws of finance-capital and of imperialism, which have flooded the earth with blood in the most criminal of all wars, the Great Convention endorses and confirms the following acts of the Soviet Commissars :

- (a) The annulling of the Secret Treaties, the organization of fraternization between the workmen and peasants of the armies now opposing each other in the field, the conclusion at all costs of a democratic peace by the workers themselves, without annexations or indemnities, on the basis of the self-determination of nations through revolutionary means.
- (b) The complete break with the barbarous policy of capitalist civilization, which establishes the power of the exploiters in a few select nations at the cost of the enslavement of hundreds of millions of the toiling masses in Asia, in the Colonies and in all small countries.
- (c) The recognition of the complete independence of Finland, the withdrawal of the Russian armies' from Persia, and the right of self-determination for Armenia.
- (d) The annulling of the loans which were concluded by the Government of the Tsar, the foreign banks and the Russian bourgeoisie, as the first blow against international bank and finance-capital.

IV. The Great Convention believes that the time is at hand for the decisive struggle with the exploiters, for whom there is now no place in the organs of government. Power must be now wholly and exclusively in the hands of the toiling masses and of their representative organs—the Soviets of Workmen's, Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies.

MAP OF RUSSIA SHOWING AGRARIAN CONDITIONS BEFORE REVOLUTION



Cossack & Sedentary Tatar Territories (Black Earth): Cattle (horses) and small proprietors. Average land allotment per number of commune 10-20 desiatines. No poor families exist.

Dry Steppe inhabited by Nomad Tartars: Land tenure - ranch communes (Yurts)

South Eastern Black Earth Zone: In European territories in villages communes and private estates. Average land allotment under commune 3 desiatines. No poor families exist. Large cattle raising and sheep raising. Large grain raising. Large stock raising. Large stock raising. Large stock raising.

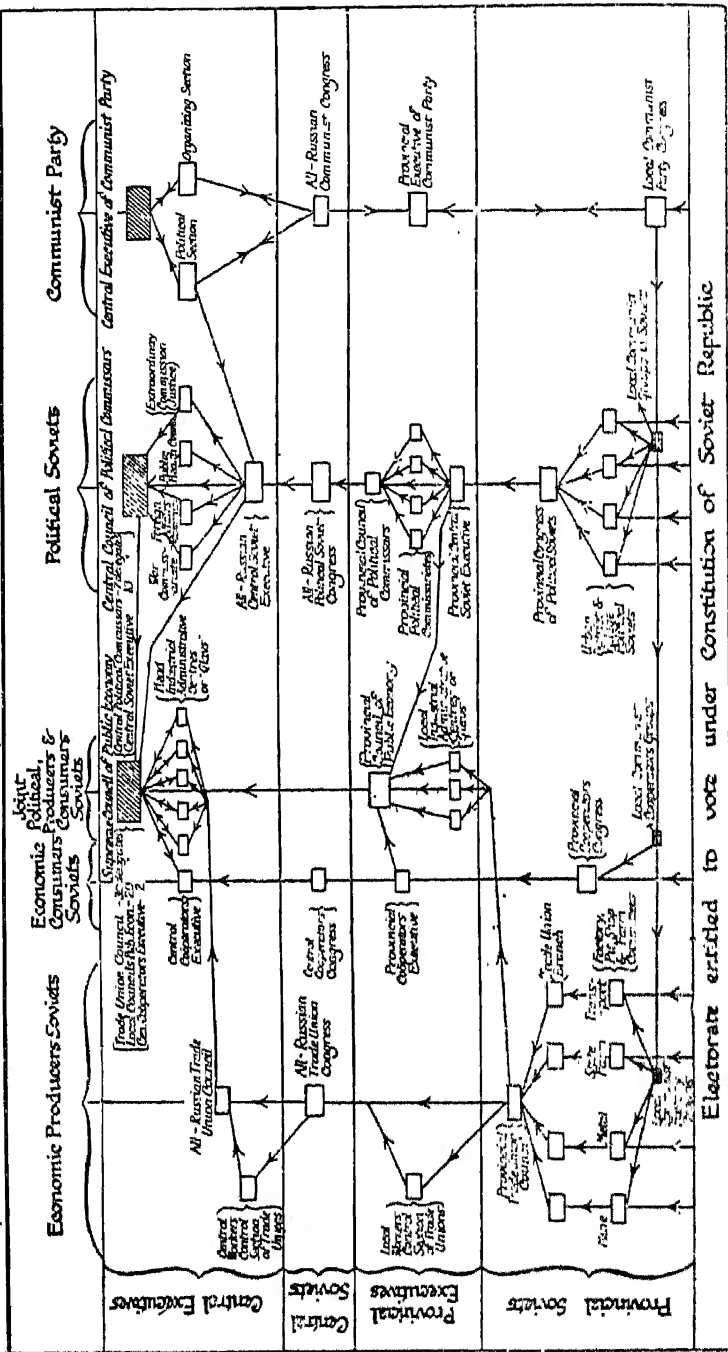
Northern Forest Zone: In European territories cattle communes & small private estates. Poor of peasant families, and engaged in factory and domestic industry.

Desert & Oases: Cotton and cotton cultivation by irrigation. Small and large private property both in land and water for irrigation.

South Western & Central Black Earth Zone: In European S.W. (Ukraine), peasant communes. Average land allotment under commune 5 desiatines. No poor families exist. Large cattle raising and sheep raising. Large grain raising. Large stock raising. Large stock raising.

Direction of peasant migrations

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